

ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, What *mean you* by these stones? 7. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. 8. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place, where they lodged, and laid them down there. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

We may well imagine how busy Joshua and all the men of war were, while they were passing over Jordan, when besides their own marching into an enemy's country, and in the face of the enemy, which could not but occasion them many thoughts of heart, they had their wives, and children, and families, their cattle, and tents, and all their effects, bag and baggage, to convey by this strange and untrodden path, which we must suppose, either very muddy, or very stony, troublesome to the weak, and frightful to the timorous, the descent to the bottom of the river, and the ascent out of it steep, so that every man must needs have his head full of care, and his hands full of business, and Joshua more than any of them. And yet in the midst of all his hurry, care must be taken to perpetuate the memorial of this wondrous work of God, and this care might not be adjourned to a time of greater leisure. Note, How much soever we have to do of business for our selves, and our families, we must not neglect, or omit what we have to do for the glory of God, and the serving of his honour, for that is our best business.

Now, 1. God gave orders for the preparing of this memorial. Had Joshua done it without divine direction, it might have looked like a design to perpetuate his own name and honour, nor would it have commanded so sacred and venerable a regard from posterity, as now, when God himself appointed it. Note, God's works of wonder ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance, and means devised for the preserving of the memorial of them. Some of the Israelites that passed over Jordan, perhaps were so stupid, and so little affected with this great favour of God to them, that they were in no care to have it remembered; while others, it may be, were so much affected with it, and had such deep impressions made upon them by it, that they thought there needed no memorial of it to be erected, the heart and tongue of every Israelite in every age would be a living lasting monument of it. But God knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget his works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not, or would not, read the record of it in the sacred history, might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it, which the common tradition of the country would be an explication of; it would likewise serve to corroborate the proof of the matter of fact, and would remain a standing evidence of it to those that in after ages might question the truth of it.

A monument is to be erected, and (1.) Joshua, as chief captain, must give directions about it, *ver. 1. When all the people were clean passed over Jordan*, not so much as the feeble, that were the hindmost of them left behind, so that God had done his work completely, every Israelite got safe into Canaan, then God spake unto Joshua to provide materials for this monument. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick, that Joshua was gone into some place of retirement, to return thanks immediately for this wonderful mercy, and then God met him, and spake thus to him. Or, perhaps, it was by Eleazar the priest, that God gave these and other instructions to Joshua, for tho' he is not mentioned here, yet when Joshua was ordained by the imposition of hands to this great trust, God appointed that Eleazar should *ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim, and at his word, Joshua, and all the children of Israel must go out and come in*, Numb. xxvii. 21. (2.) One man out of each tribe, and he a chosen man, must be employed to prepare materials for this monument, that each tribe might have the story told them by one of themselves, and each tribe might contribute something to the glory of God thereby, *ver. 2, 4. Out of every tribe a man*. Not the Levites only, but every Israelite must, in his place, help to *make known to the sons of men Gods mighty acts*, Psal. cxlv. 12. The two tribes, tho' seated already in their possession, yet sharing in the mercy, must lend a hand to the memorial of it. (3.) The stones that must be set up for this memorial, are ordered to be taken out of the midst of the channel (where, probably, there lay abundance of great stones) and as near as might be, from the very place where the priests stood *with the ark*, *ver. 3, 5*. This intended monument deserved to have been made of stones curiously cut with the finest and most exquisite art, but these stones out of the bottom of the river were more natural, and more apt indications of the miracle: let posterity

know by this that Jordan was driven back; for these very stones were then fetched out of it. In the institution of signs, God always chose that which was most proper and significant; rather than that which is pompous or curious; for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world. These twelve men, after they got over Jordan, must be sent back to the place where the ark stood; being permitted to come near it; which others might not, for this service; *Pass over before the ark*, *ver. 5. i. e.* into the presence of the ark, which now stands in the midst of Jordan; and thence fetch these stones. (4.) The use of these stones is here appointed for a sign, *ver. 6.* a memorial, *ver. 7*. They would give occasion to the children to ask their parents in time to come, *how those stones came thither?* probably the land about not being stony: and then the parents would inform them, as they themselves had been informed, that in this place Jordan was divided by the almighty power of God, to give Israel passage into Canaan; as Joshua enlargeth on this head, *ver. 22, &c.*

2. According to these orders the thing was done.

1. Twelve stones were taken up out of the midst of Jordan; and carried in the sight of the people to the place where they had their head quarters that night, *ver. 4*. It is probable the stones they took were as big as they could well carry, and as near as might be of a size, and shape. But whether they went away with them immediately to the place, or whether they staid to attend the ark, and kept pace with the solemn procession of that, to grace its triumphant entry into Canaan, is not certain. By these stones which they were ordered to take up, God did as it were give them livery and seisin of this good land; it is all their own, let them enter and take possession; therefore what these twelve did, the children of Israel are said to do, *ver. 8*. because they were the representatives of their respective tribes. In allusion to this we may observe, That the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, when having overcome the sharpness of death and dried up that Jordan, he had opened that kingdom of heaven to all believers, he appointed his twelve apostles, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, by the memorial of the gospel to transmit the knowledge of this to remote places, and future ages.

2. Other twelves stones (probably much larger than the others, for we read not that they were each of them one man's load) were set up *in the midst of Jordan*, *ver. 9*. piled up so high in a heap or pillar, as that the top of it might be seen above water; when the river was low, or seen in the water; when it was clear, or at least the noise or commotion of the water passing over would be observable, and the bargemen would avoid it, as they do a rock; some way or other, it is likely, it was discernable so as to notify the very place where the ark stood, and to serve for a duplicate to the other monument, which was to be set up on dry land in Gilgal, for the confirming of its testimony, and the preserving of its tradition. The sign being doubled, no doubt, the thing was certain.

10. ¶ For the priests which bare the ark, stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over. 11. And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests in the presence of the people. 12. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them: 13. About forty thousand prepared for war, passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14. ¶ On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life. 15. And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, 16. Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan. 17. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan. 18. And it came to pass when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lift up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before. 19. ¶ And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal in the east-border of Jericho.

The inspired historian seems to be well pleased with his subject here, that he is loth to go off it, and is therefore very particular in his narrative, especially in observing how closely Joshua pursued the orders God gave him, and that he did nothing without divine direction, finishing all that *the Lord had commanded him*, (*ver. 10.*) which is also said to be what Moses commanded. We read not of any particular commands that Moses gave Joshua about this matter, the thing was altogether new to him. It must therefore

fore be understood of the general instructions Moses had given him to follow the divine conduct, to deliver that to the people which he had *received of the Lord*, and to take all occasions to mind them of their duty to God, as the best return for his favours to them: This which Moses, who was now dead and gone, had said to him, he had in mind at this time, and *did accordingly*. It is well for us to have the good instructions that have been given us ready to us, when we have occasion for them.

1. *All the people hastened and passed over*, ver. 10. Some understand it of the twelve men that carried the stones, but it seems rather to be meant of the body of the people; for tho' an account was given of their passing over, ver. 1. yet here it is repeated for the sake of this circumstance, which was to be added, that they passed over in haste, either because Joshua by their officers ordered them to make haste, for it was to be but one day's work, and they must not *leave a hoof behind*; or, perhaps it was their own inclination that hastened them. (1.) Some hastened because they were not able to trust God, they were afraid the waters should return upon them, being conscious of guilt, and diffident of the divine power and goodness. (2.) Others, because they were not willing to tempt God to continue the miracle longer than needs must, nor would they put the patience of the priests that bare the ark too much to the stretch by unnecessary delay. (3.) Others, because they were eager to be in Canaan, and would thus shew how much they longed after that pleasant land. (4.) Those that considered least, yet hastened because others did. *He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate God's counsels, but doth make haste to attend them*, *Isa. xxviii. 16*.

2. The two tribes and a half led the van, ver. 12, 13. So they had promised when they had their lot given them on that side Jordan, *Numb. xxxii. 27*. And Joshua had lately minded them of their promise, *chap. i. 14*. It was fit they that had the first settlement should be the first in the encounter of difficulties, the rather, because they had not the encumbrance of families with them as the other tribes had, and they were all chosen men, and fit for service, ready armed. It was a good providence that they had so strong a body to lead them on, and would be an encouragement to the rest. And the two tribes had no reason to complain, the post of danger is the post of honour.

3. When all the people were got clear to the other side, the priests with the ark came up out of Jordan. This one would think should have been done of course, their own reason would tell them, that now there was no more occasion for them, and yet they did not stir a step till Joshua ordered them to move, and Joshua did not order them out of Jordan, till God directed him to do so, ver. 15, 16, 17. So observant were they of Joshua, and he of God, which was their praise, as it was their happiness to be under so good a conduct. How low a condition soever God may at any time bring his priests or people to, let them patiently wait, till by his providence he shall call them up out of it, as the priests here were called to come up out of Jordan, and let them not be weary of waiting, while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant, in the depth of their adversity.

4. As soon as ever the priests, and the ark were come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river which had stood on a heap, gradually flowed down according to their nature and usual course, and soon filled the channel again, ver. 18. This makes it yet more evident, that the stop that had now been given to the river, was not from any secret natural course; but purely from the power of God's presence, and for the sake of his Israel, for when Israel's turn was served, and the token of his presence was removed, immediately the water went forward again, so that if it be asked, *What ailed thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back?* It must be answered, it was purely in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the Israel of God, there is therefore none like unto the God of *Jeshurun*; happy also art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people? Some observe here, by way of allusion, that when the ark, and the priests that bare it are removed from any place, the flood-gates are drawn up, the defence is departed, and an inundation of judgments is to be expected presently. Those that are unchurched will soon be undone. The glory is departed, if the ark be taken.

5. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua by all this, ver. 14. *On that day the Lord magnified Joshua*, both by the fellowship he admitted him to with himself, speaking to him, upon all occasions, and being ready to be consulted by him: and by the authority he confirmed him in, over both priests and people. Those that honour God, he will honour, and when he will magnify a man, as he had said he would magnify Joshua, (*chap. iii. 7*.) he will do it effectually. Yet it was not for Joshua's sake only that he was thus magnified, but to put him in a capacity of doing so much the more service to Israel, for hereupon they feared him, as they feared Moses. See here what is the best and surest way to command the respects of inferiors, and to gain their reverence and observance, not by blustering and threatening, and carrying it with a high hand, but by holiness and love, and all possible indications of a constant regard to their welfare, and to God's will and honour. Those are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who make it to appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them. Those that are sancti-

fied, are truly magnified, and are worthy of double honour. Favourites of Heaven should be looked on with awe.

6. An account is kept of the time of this great event, ver. 19. it was *on the tenth day of the first month*, just forty years since they came out of Egypt, wanting five days. God had said in his wrath that they should wander forty years in the wilderness, but to make up that forty, was taken in the first year, which was then past, and had been a year of triumph in their deliverance out of Egypt, and this last, which had been a year of triumph likewise on the other side Jordan, so that all the forty were not years of sorrow; and at last he brought them into Canaan five days before the forty years were ended, to shew how little pleasure God takes in punishing, how swift he is to shew mercy, and that *for the elects sake the days of trouble are shortened*, *Matth. xxiv. 22*. God ordered it so that they should enter Canaan four days before the annual solemnity of the passover, and on the very day when the preparation for it was to begin, *Exod. xii. 3*. because he would have their entrance into Canaan graced and sanctified with that religious feast, and would have them then to be minded of their deliverance out of Egypt, that comparing them together, God might be glorified as the *alpha* and *omega* of their bliss.

20. ¶ And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. 21. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? 22. Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 23. For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: 24. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

The twelve stones which were laid down in Gilgal, ver. 8. are here set up, either one upon another, yet so as that they might be distinctly counted, or one by another in rows; for after they were fixed, they are not called a heap of stones, but *these stones*.

1. It is here supposed, that posterity would enquire into the meaning of them, supposing them intended for a memorial. *Your children shall ask their fathers*, (for whom else should they ask?) *What mean these stones?* Note, Those that will be wise when they are old, must be inquisitive when they are young. Our Lord Jesus, tho' he had in himself the fulness of knowledge, has by his example, taught children and young people to hear and ask questions, *Luke ii. 46*. Perhaps when John was baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, (the house of passage, where the people passed over) he pointed at these very stones when he said, *Mat. iii. 9*. God is able of these stones (which were at first set up by the twelve tribes) to raise up children unto Abraham. The stones being the memorial of the miracles, the childrens question gave occasion for the improvement of it; but our Saviour saith, *Luke xiv. 40*. *If the children should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out*; for one way other, the Lord will be glorified in his works of wonder.

2. The parents are here directed what answer to give to this enquiry, ver. 22. *Ye shall let your children know* that which you have yourselves learned from the written word and from your fathers. Note, It is the duty of parents to acquaint their children betimes with the word and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go.

1. They must let their children know that Jordan was driven back before Israel, who went through it upon dry land, and this is the very place where they passed over. They saw how deep and strong a stream Jordan now was, but the divine power put a stop to it, even then when it overflowed all its banks, and this for you, that live so long after. Note, God's mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us: And we should take all occasions to revive the remembrance of the great things God did for our fathers in the days of old. The place thus marked would be a memorandum to them; Israel came over this Jordan: a local memory would be of use to them, and the sight of the place remind them of that which was done here; and not only the inhabitants of that country, but strangers and travellers would look upon these stones and receive instruction. Many upon the sight of the stones would go to their bibles, and there read the history of this wondrous work; and some perhaps upon reading the history, tho' living at a distance, would have the curiosity to go and see the stones.

2. They must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red-sea forty years before, as the Lord your God did to the Red-sea. Note, 1. It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with former mercies, for by making the comparison it appears that God is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. 2. Later mercies should bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive our thankfulness for them.

3. They must put them in the way of making a good use of these works of wonder, the knowledge whereof was thus carefully transmitted to them, ver. 24. (1.) The power of God was hereby magnified

magnified. All the world was or might be convinced that *the hand of the Lord is mighty*; that nothing is too hard for God to do, nor can any power, no not that of nature itself, obstruct what God will effect. The deliverances of God's people are instructions to all people, and fair warnings not to contend with omnipotence. (2.) The people of God were engaged and encouraged to persevere in his service; *that ye might fear the Lord your God*, and consequently do your duty to him, and this for ever; or all days, *Marg.* every day, all the days of your lives, and your seed throughout your generations. The remembrance of this wonderful work should effectually restrain them from the worship of other gods, and constrain them to abide and abound in the service of their own God. Note, In all the instructions and informations parents give their children, they should have this chiefly in their eye to teach and engage them to *fear God for ever*. Serious godliness is the best learning.

C H A P. V.

Israel is now got over Jordan, and the waters which had opened before them to favour their march forwards, are closed again behind them to forbid their retreat backward; they have now got footing in Canaan, and must apply themselves to the conquest of it; in order to which this chapter tells us, (1.) How their enemies were dispirited, ver. 1. (2.) What was done at their first landing, to assist and encourage them. 1. The covenant of circumcision was renewed, ver. 2—9. 2. The feast of the passover was celebrated, ver. 10. 3. Their camp was victualled with the corn of the land, whereupon the manna ceased, ver. 11, 12. 4. The captain of the Lord's host himself appeared to Joshua to animate and direct him, ver. 13—15.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan west-ward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted; neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel. 2. ¶ At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. 3. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the fore-skins. 4. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came out of Egypt, *that were males, even all the men of war*, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. 5. Now all the people that came out, were circumcised; but all the people *that were born in the wilderness by the way*, as they came forth out of Egypt, *them they had not circumcised*. 6. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *that were men of war*, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD; unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. 7. And their children, *whom he raised up in their stead*, them Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. 8. And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. 9. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you: wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

A mighty shew no doubt the numerous camp of Israel made in the plains of Jericho, where now they had pitched their tents; *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* That which had long been the church in the wilderness, is now come up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved, and looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; how terrible she was in the eyes of her enemies, we are here told, *ver. 1.* how fair and clear she was made in the eyes of her friends, by the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, we are told in the following verses.

1. Here is the fright which the Canaanites were put into by their miraculous passing over Jordan, *ver. 1.* The news of it was soon dispersed all the country over, not only as a prodigy in itself, but as an alarm to all the kings and kingdoms of Canaan. Now, as when Babylon was taken, *One post runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another*, to carry the amazing tidings to every corner of their land, *Jer. li. 31.* And here we are told what impressions the tidings made upon the kings of this land, *their heart melted like wax before the fire, neither was there spirit in them any more.* This intimates that tho' the heart of the people generally had fainted before, as Rahab owned, *chap. ii. 9.* yet the

kings had till now kept up their spirits pretty well, had promised themselves that being in possession, their country populous, and their cities fortified, they should be able to make their part good against the invaders; but when they heard not only that they were come over Jordan, and that that defence of their country was broken through, but that they were come over by a miracle, the God of nature manifestly fighting for them, *their hearts failed them* too, they gave up the cause for gone, and were now at their wits end. And (1.) They had reason enough to be afraid, Israel itself was a formidable body, and much more so when God was its head; a God of almighty power. What can make head against them, if Jordan be driven back before them? (2.) God impressed these fears upon them; and dispirited them, as he had promised, *Exod. xxiii. 27. I will send my fear before thee.* God can make the wicked to fear where no fear is, *Psal. liii. 5.* much more where there is such cause for fear as was here. He that made the soul can when he pleaseth make his sword thus to approach to it, and kill it with his terrors.

2. The opportunity which this gave to the Israelites to circumcise those among them that were uncircumcised, *At that time, (ver. 2.)* when the country about them was in that great consternation, God ordered Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel, for at that time it might be done with safety even in an enemy's country; their hearts being melted, their hands were tied, that they could not take this advantage against them, as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites, to come upon them *when they were sore.* Joshua could not be sure of this, and therefore if he had ordered this general circumcision just at this time of his own head, he might justly have been censured as imprudent, for how good soever the thing was in itself, in the eye of reason it was not reasonable at this time, and might have been of dangerous consequence; but when God commanded him to do it, he must not consult with flesh and blood; he that bid them do it, no doubt would protect them and bear them out in it. Now observe,

1. The occasion there was for this general circumcision, (1.) All that came out of Egypt were circumcised, *ver. 5.* While they had peace in Egypt, doubtless they circumcised their children the eighth day according to the law. But after they began to be oppressed, especially when the edict was made for the destruction of their male infants, the administration of this ordinance was interrupted, many of them were uncircumcised, of whom there was a general circumcision, either during the time of the three days darkness, as Dr Lightfoot conjectures, or a year after, just before their eating the second passover, at mount Sinai and in order to that solemnity, *Numb. ix. 2.* as many think. And it is with reference to that general circumcision, that this here is called a second; *ver. 2.* But the learned Masius thinks it refers to the general circumcision of Abraham's family when that ordinance was first instituted, *Gen. xvii. 23.* That first confirmed the promise of the land of Canaan, this second was a thankful celebration of the performance of that promise. But (2.) All that were born in the wilderness, viz. after their walking in the wilderness, became by their divine sentence a judgment upon them for their disobedience, as is intimated by that repetition of the sentence, *ver. 6.* All that were born since that fatal day that God swore in his wrath that none of that generation should enter into his rest, were uncircumcised.

But what shall we say to this? Had not God enjoined it to Abraham under a very severe penalty, that every man-child of his seed should be circumcised on the eighth day *Gen. xvii. 9—14.* Was it not the seal of the everlasting covenant? Was not so great a stress laid upon it then when they were coming out of Egypt, that when immediately after the first passover the law concerning that feast was made perpetual, this was one clause of it that no uncircumcised person should eat of it, but should be deemed as a stranger? And yet under the government of Moses himself, to have all their children that were born for thirty-eight years together left uncircumcised, is unaccountable. So great an omission could not be general but by divine direction.

Now, 1. Some think circumcision was omitted because it was needless: it was appointed to be a mark of distinction between the Israelites, and other nations, and therefore in the wilderness where they were so perfectly separated from all, and mingled with none, there was no occasion for it. 2. Others think they did not look upon the precept of circumcision as obliging them till they came to settle in Canaan, for in the covenant made with them at mount Sinai nothing was said about circumcision, neither was it of Moses but of the fathers, *Joh. vii. 22.* and with particular reference to the grant of the land of Canaan, *Gen. xvii. 8.* 3. Others think God favourably dispensed with the omission of this ordinance in consideration of the unsettledness of their state, and their frequent removes while they were in the wilderness. It was requisite that children after they were circumcised should rest for some time while they were sore, and stirring them might be dangerous to them, God therefore would have mercy and not sacrifice. This reason is generally acquiesced in, but to me it is not satisfactory, for sometimes they staid a year in a place, *Numb. ix. 22.* if not much longer; and in their removes the little children tho' sore might be wrapt so warm, and carried so easy as to receive no damage, and might certainly be much better accommodated than the mothers in travel, or lying in. Therefore 4. To me it seems to have

have been a continued token of God's displeasure against them for their unbelief and murmuring. Circumcision was originally a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, as we observed before. It was in the believing hope of that good land that the patriarchs circumcised their children: but when God had *sworn in his wrath* concerning the men of war which came out of Egypt, that they should be consumed in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, nor come within sight of it (as that sentence is here repeated *ver. 6*. relation being thereunto had) as a farther ratification of that sentence, and to be a constant memorandum of it, to them, all that fell under that sentence, and were to fall by it were forbidden to circumcise their children, by which they were plainly told, that whatever others might, they should never have the benefit of that promise which circumcision was the seal of. And this was such a significant indication of God's wrath, as the breaking of the tables of the covenant was when Israel had broke the covenant by making the golden calf. It is true there is no express mention of this judicial prohibition in the account of that sentence; but an intimation of it, *Numb. xiv. 33. Your children shall bear your whoredoms*. It is probable, the children of Caleb and Joshua were circumcised, for they were excepted out of that sentence, and of Caleb it is particularly said, *to him will I give the land, and his children*, *Deut. i. 36*. which was the very promise that circumcision was the seal of: and Joshua is here bid to circumcise the people, not his own family. Whatever the reason was, it seems this great ordinance was intermitted in Israel, for almost forty years together, which is a plain indication that it was not of absolute necessity, nor was to be of perpetual obligation, but should in the fulness of time be abolished, as now it was for so long a time suspended.

2. The orders given to Joshua for this general circumcision, *ver. 2. Circumcise again the children of Israel*, not the same persons, but the body of the people. Why was this ordered to be done now? *Answ.* (1.) Because now the promise which circumcision was instituted to be the seal of was performed. The seed of Israel was brought safe into the land of Canaan, let them therefore hereby own the truth of that promise which their fathers had disbelieved, and could not find in their hearts to trust to. (2.) Because now the threatening which the suspending of circumcision for thirty-eight years was the ratification of was fully executed by the expiring of the forty years. That *warfare is accomplished, that iniquity is pardoned*, (*Isa. xl. 2.*) and therefore now the seal of the covenant is revived again. But why was it not done sooner? why not while they were resting some months in the plains of Moab? why not during the thirty days of their mourning for Moses? or, why was it not deferred longer till they had made some progress in the conquest of Canaan, and had gained a settlement there? or at least till they had intrenched themselves, and fortified their camp? why must it be done the very next day after they were come over Jordan? *Answ.* Because divine wisdom saw that to be the fittest time, just when the forty years were ended, and they were entered Canaan; and the reasons which human wisdom would have offered against it, were easily over-ruled. (1.) God would hereby shew, that the camp of Israel was not governed by the ordinary rules and measures of war, but by immediate direction from God, who by thus exposing them, in the most dangerous moments, magnified his own power in protecting them, even then. And this great instance of security, in disabling themselves for action just then when they were entering upon action, proclaimed such a confidence in the divine care for their safety as would increase their enemies fears; much more when their scouts informed them not only of the thing itself that was done, but of the meaning of it: that it was a seal of the grant of this land to Israel. (2.) God would hereby animate his people Israel against the difficulties they were now to encounter, by confirming his covenant with them which gave them unquestionable assurance of victory and success, and the full possession of the land of promise. (3.) God would hereby teach them, and us with them, in all great undertakings to *begin with God*, to make sure his favour, by offering ourselves to him *a living sacrifice*, (for that was signified by the blood of circumcision) and then we may expect to prosper in all we do. (4.) The reviving of circumcision after it had been so long disused, was designed to revive the observation of other institutions, the omission of which had been connived at, in the wilderness. This command to circumcise them was to mind them of that which Moses had told them, *Deut. xii. 8*. that when they were *come over Jordan* they must not do as they had done *in the wilderness*, but must come under a stricter discipline. It was said concerning many of the laws God had given them, that they must observe them *in the land* to which they were going, *Deut. vi. 1.—xii. 1*. (5.) This second circumcision, as it is here called, was typical of the spiritual circumcision with which the Israel of God when they enter into the gospel rest are circumcised; it is the learned bishop Pierçon's observation, That this circumcision being performed under the conduct of Joshua, Moses's successor, it speaks *our Jesus to be the true circumciser*, the author of *another circumcision* than that of the flesh, commanded by the law, even the *circumcision of the heart*, *Rom. ii. 29*. called the *circumcision of Christ*, *Col. ii. 11*.

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Lastly, The names given to the place where this was done, to perpetuate the memory of it. (1.) It was called *the hill of the foreskins*, *ver. 3*. Probably, the foreskins that were cut off were laid on a heap, and covered with earth, so that they made a little hillock. (2.) It was called Gilgal, from a word which signifies to take away, or devolve, from that which God said to Joshua, *ver. 9. This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt*. God is jealous for the honour of his people, his own honour being so much interested in it; and whatever reproach they may lie under for a time, first or last it will certainly be rolled away, and every tongue that riseth up against him he will condemn. (1.) Their circumcision rolled away the reproach of Egypt. They were hereby owned to be the free-born children of God, having the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed. They were tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and that was their reproach; but now they were circumcised, it was to be hoped they would be so entirely devoted to God that the reproach of their affection to Egypt would be rolled away. (2.) Their coming safe to Canaan rolled away the reproach of Egypt, for it silenced that spiteful suggestion of the Egyptians, that *for mischief they were brought out, the wilderness had shut them in*, *Exod. xiv. 3*. their wandering so long in the wilderness confirmed the reproach; but now they were entered into Canaan in triumph, that reproach was done away. When God glorifies himself in perfecting the salvation of his people, he not only silenceth the reproach of their enemies, but rolls it upon themselves.

10. ¶ And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even in the plains of Jericho. 11. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day. 12. ¶ And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

We may well imagine what a gaze the country was at; and when they observed the motions of the enemy could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field, they are apt to think themselves excused from religious exercises, they have not time nor thoughts to attend them; yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was afterwards said to another Joshua might truly be said to this, *Hear now, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee are much wondered at*, *Zech. iii. 8*. and yet indeed he took the right method. That is likely to end well, which begins with God.

Here is, 1. A solemn passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, *the fourteenth day of the first month*, and in the same place where they were circumcised, *ver. 10*. While they were wandering in the wilderness, they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance as a further token of God's displeasure; but now in answer to the prayer of Moses, upon the passing of that sentence, *Psal. xc. 15*. God comforted them again, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again. Now they are entered into Canaan, it is very seasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day, we must not forget how welcome the morning light was, when we had long waited for it. The solemn passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when they that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them *breaking of bread*, *Act ii. 41, 42*. They kept this passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them, and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance: Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts, their land should be taken under the special protection of the divine providence, *Exod. xxxiv. 24. Neither shall any man desire thy land*. He now prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies, *Psal. xxiii. 5*.

2. Provision made for their camp of the corn of the land, and the ceasing of the manna thereupon, *ver. 11, 12*. Manna was a wonderful

wonderful mercy to them when they needed it ; but it was the mark of a wilderness state, it was the food of children, and therefore, tho' it was angels food, and not to be complained of as light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the corn of the land, and that they are now furnished with ; the country people being retired for safety into Jericho, left their barns, and fields, and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonably, for, (1.) After the passover they were to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which they could not do according to the appointment, when they had nothing but manna to live upon (and perhaps that was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness). But now they found old corn enough in the barns of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion ; thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and little did they, who laid it up, think, whose all these things should be which they had provided. (2.) On the morrow after the passover sabbath, they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. And this they were particularly ordered to do, when they were come into the land which God would give them ; and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year, ver. 12. which was then growing and beginning to be ripe : Thus they were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good householders, Matth. xiii. 52. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands, they had an opportunity of honouring God with them, and employing them in his service, according to his appointment. And thus, behold all things were clean and comfortable to them. Calvin is of opinion, that they had kept the passover every year in its season, during their wandering in the wilderness, tho' it be not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did notwithstanding that admit them to offer other sacrifices : But some gather from Amos v. 25. that after the sentence passed upon them, there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no passover kept. And it is observable, that after that sentence, Numb. xiv. the law that follows, chap. xv. concerning sacrifices, begins, ver. 1. When ye shall be come into the land of your habitations, you shall do so and so.

Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna, as soon as ever they had eaten the old corn of the land ; (1.) To shew that it did not come by chance, or common providence, as snow or hail doth, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness ; for as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it, and no longer. (2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies, when they may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel according to their deserts, the manna had ceased then when they called it light bread, but as long as they needed it, God continued it, tho' they despised it ; and now they needed it not, God withdrew it, tho' perhaps some of them desired it. He is a wise father that knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to them, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourisheth his people in this wilderness, and tho' oft forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here, but when we come to the heavenly Canaan, this manna will cease, for we shall have no longer need of it.

13. ¶ And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand : and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ? 14. And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my LORD unto his servant ! 15. And the captain of the LORDS host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest, is holy : and Joshua did so.

We have hitherto found God often speaking to Joshua, but we read not till now of any appearance of God's glory to him ; now his difficulties increased, his encouragements were increased in proportion. Observe,

1. The time when he was favoured with this vision, it was immediately after he had performed the great solemnities of circumcision and the passover ; then God made himself known to him. Note, We may then expect the discoveries of the divine grace, when we are found in the way of our duty, and are diligent and sincere in our attendance on holy ordinances.

2. The place where he had this vision, it was by Jericho,—in Jericho, so the word is in it by faith and hope, tho' as yet he had not begun to lay siege to it, in it in thought and expectation, or, in the fields of Jericho, hard by the city ; there, it should seem, he was all alone, fearless of danger, because sure of the divine protection. There he was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how

to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will help those that help themselves, *vigilantibus non dormientibus succurrit lex*. Joshua was in his post, as a general, when God came and made himself known to him as a *generalissimo*.

3. The appearance it self. Joshua, as is usual with those that are full of thought and care, was looking downwards ; his eyes fixed on the ground, when of a sudden he was surprized with the appearance, who stood before him at some little distance ; which obliged him to lift up his eyes, and gave a diversion to his thoughts, ver. 13. he appeared to him as a man, but a considerable man, and one fit to be taken notice of. Now, (1.) We have reason to think that this man was the Son of God, the eternal Word, who before he assumed the human nature for good and all, frequently appeared in a human shape. So bishop Patrick thinks consonant to the judgment of the fathers ; Joshua gave him divine honours, and he received them, which a created angel would not have done, and he is called Jehovah, chap. vi. 2. (2.) He here appeared as a soldier, with his sword drawn in his hand. To Abraham in his tent, he appeared as a traveller, to Joshua in the field, as a man of war ; Christ will be to his people what their faith expects and desires. Christ had his sword drawn, which served, (1.) To justify the war Joshua was engaging in, and to shew him that it was of God, who gave him commission to kill and slay. If the sovereign draw the sword, that proclaims war, and authorizeth the subject to do so to. The sword is then well drawn when Christ draws it, and gives the banner to them that fear him to be displayed because of the truth, Psal. lx. 4. (2.) To encourage him to carry it on with vigour ; for Christ's sword drawn in his hand, notes how ready he is for the defence and salvation of his people, who through him shall do valiantly. His sword turns every way.

4. The bold question with which Joshua accosted him. He did not send a servant, but stepped up to him himself, and asked, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ? Which intimates his readiness to entertain him, if he were for them, and to fight him if he were against them. This speaks, (1.) His great courage and resolution. He was not ruffled by the suddenness of the appearance, nor daunted with the majesty and bravery, which, no doubt, appeared in the countenance of the person he saw, but, with a presence of mind that became so great a general, put this fair question to him. God had bid Joshua be courageous, and by this, it appears that he was so, for what God by his word requires of his people, he doth by his grace work in them. (2.) His great concern for the people and their cause ; so heartily has he embarked in the interests of Israel, that none shall stand by him with the face of a man, but he will know whether he be a friend or a foe. It should seem he suspected him for an enemy, a Goliath that was come to destroy the armies of the living God, and to give him a challenge. Thus apt are we to look upon that as against us, which is most for us. The question plainly implies, that the cause between the Israelites and Canaanites, between Christ and Belzebub, will not admit of a neutrality. He that is not with us is against us.

5. The account he gave of himself, ver. 14. nay, not for your adversaries, you may be sure, but as captain of the host of the Lord, am I now come, not only for you as a friend, but over you, as commander in chief. Here was now, as of old, Gen. xxxii. 2. Mahanaim, two hosts, an host of Israelites ready to engage the Canaanites, and an host of angels to protect them therein, and he is captain of both, conducts the host of Israel, and commands the host of angels to their assistance. Perhaps, in allusion to this, Christ is called the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10. and a leader and commander to the people, Isa. lv. 4. They cannot but be victorious that have such a captain. He now came as captain to review the troops, to animate them, and to give the necessary orders for the besieging of Jericho.

6. The great respect Joshua paid him, when he understood who he was ; it is probable not only by what he said, but by some other sensible indications, that he was a divine person, and not a man.

1. Joshua paid homage to him. He fell on his face to the earth, and did worship. Joshua was himself general of the forces of Israel, and yet he was far from looking with jealousy upon this stranger, who produced a commission for captain of the Lord's host above him, he did not offer to dispute his claims, but cheerfully submitted to him as his commander. It will become the greatest of men to be humble and reverent in their addresses to God.

2. He begged to receive commands and directions from him, what saith my Lord unto his servant ? His former question was not so bold and soldier-like, but this was as pious and saint-like ; nor was it any disparagement to the greatness of Joshua's spirit, thus to humble himself when he has to do with God : even crowned heads cannot bow too low before the throne of the Lord Jesus, who is King of kings, Psal. ii. 10, 11.—lxxii. 10, 11. Observe, 1. The relation he owns between himself and Christ ; that Christ was his Lord, and himself his servant, and under his command, Christ his captain, and himself a soldier under him, to do as he is bidden, Matth. viii. 9. Note, The foundation of all acceptable obedience is laid in a sincere dedication of ourselves, as servants

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Here is, 1. A solemn passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, *the fourteenth day of the first month,* and in the same place where they were circumcised, *ver. 10.* While they were wandering in the wilderness, they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance as a further token of God's displeasure; but now in answer to the prayer of Moses, upon the passing of that sentence, *Psal. xc. 15.* God comforted them again, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again. Now they are entered into Canaan, it is very seasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day, we must not forget how welcome the morning light was, when we had long waited for it. The solemn passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when they that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them *breaking of bread,* *Act ii. 41, 42.* They kept this passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them, and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance: Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts, their land should be taken under the special protection of the divine providence, *Exod. xxxiv. 24. Neither shall any man desire thy land.* He now prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies, *Psal. xxiii. 5.*

2. Provision made for their camp of the corn of the land, and the ceasing of the manna thereupon, *ver. 11. 12.* Manna was a wonderful

wonderful mercy to them when they needed it; but it was the mark of a wilderness state, it was the food of children, and therefore, tho' it was angels food, and not to be complained of as light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the corn of the land, and that they are now furnished with; the country people being retired for safety into Jericho, left their barns, and fields; and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonably, for; (1.) After the passover they were to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which they could not do according to the appointment, when they had nothing but manna to live upon (and perhaps that was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness). But now they found old corn enough in the barns of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion; thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and little did they, who laid it up, think, whose all these things should be which they had provided. (2.) On the morrow after the passover sabbath, they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, Lev. xxiii. 10, 11. And this they were particularly ordered to do, when they were come into the land which God would give them; and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year, ver. 12. which was then growing and beginning to be ripe: Thus they were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good boughsholders, Matth. xiii. 52. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands, they had an opportunity of honouring God with them, and employing them in his service, according to his appointment. And thus, behold all things were clean and comfortable to them. Calvin is of opinion, that they had kept the passover every year in its season, during their wandering in the wilderness, tho' it be not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did notwithstanding that admit them to offer other sacrifices: But some gather from Amos v. 25. that after the sentence passed upon them, there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no passover kept. And it is observable, that after that sentence, Numb. xiv. the law that follows, chap. xv. concerning sacrifices, begins, ver. 1. When ye shall be come into the land of your habitations, you shall do so and so.

Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna, as soon as ever they had eaten the old corn of the land; (1.) To shew that it did not come by chance, or common providence, as snow or hail doth, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it, and no longer. (2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies, when they may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel according to their deserts, the manna had ceased then when they called it light bread, but as long as they needed it, God continued it, tho' they despised it; and now they needed it not, God withdrew it, tho' perhaps some of them desired it. He is a wise father that knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to them, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourisheth his people in this wilderness, and tho' oft forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here, but when we come to the heavenly Canaan, this manna will cease, for we shall have no longer need of it.

13. ¶ And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? 14. And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my LORD unto his servant? 15. And the captain of the LORDs host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest, is holy: and Joshua did so.

We have hitherto found God often speaking to Joshua, but we read not till now of any appearance of God's glory to him; now his difficulties increased, his encouragements were increased in proportion. Observe,

1. The time when he was favoured with this vision, it was immediately after he had performed the great solemnities of circumcision and the passover; then God made himself known to him. Note, We may then expect the discoveries of the divine grace, when we are found in the way of our duty, and are diligent and sincere in our attendance on holy ordinances.

2. The place where he had this vision, it was by Jericho,—in Jericho, so the word is in it by faith and hope, tho' as yet he had not begun to lay siege to it, in it in thought and expectation, or, in the fields of Jericho, hard by the city; there, it should seem, he was all alone, fearless of danger, because sure of the divine protection. There he was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how

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to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will help those that help themselves, vigilantibus non dormientibus succurrit lex. Joshua was in his post, as a general, when God came and made himself known to him as a generalissimo.

3. The appearance it self. Joshua, as is usual with those that are full of thought and care, was looking downwards; his eyes fixed on the ground, when of a sudden he was surprized with the appearance, who stood before him at some little distance; which obliged him to lift up his eyes, and gave a diversion to his musings, ver. 13. he appeared to him as a man, but a considerable man, and one fit to be taken notice of. Now, (1.) We have reason to think that this man was the Son of God, the eternal Word; who before he assumed the human nature for good and all, frequently appeared in a human shape. So bishop Patrick thinks consonant to the judgment of the fathers; Joshua gave him divine honours, and he received them, which a created angel would not have done; and he is called Jehovah, chap. vi. 2. (2.) He here appeared as a soldier, with his sword drawn in his hand. To Abraham in his tent; he appeared as a traveller, to Joshua in the field, as a man of war; Christ will be to his people what their faith expects and desires. Christ had his sword drawn; which served, (1.) To justify the war Joshua was engaging in, and to shew him that it was of God, who gave him commission to kill and slay. If the sovereign draw the sword, that proclaims war, and authorizeth the subject to do so too. The sword is then well drawn when Christ draws it, and gives the banner to them that fear him to be displayed because of the truth, Psal. lx. 4. (2.) To encourage him to carry it on with vigour; for Christ's sword drawn in his hand, notes how ready he is for the defence and salvation of his people, who through him shall do valiantly. His sword turns every way.

4. The bold question with which Joshua accosted him. He did not send a servant, but stepped up to him himself; and asked, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? Which intimates his readiness to entertain him, if he were for them, and to fight him if he were against them. This speaks, (1.) His great courage and resolution. He was not ruffled by the suddenness of the appearance, nor daunted with the majesty and bravery, which, no doubt, appeared in the countenance of the person he saw, but, with a presence of mind that became so great a general, put this fair question to him. God had bid Joshua be courageous, and by this, it appears that he was so, for what God by his word requires of his people, he doth by his grace work in them. (2.) His great concern for the people and their cause; so heartily has he embarked in the interests of Israel, that none shall stand by him with the face of a man, but he will know whether he be a friend or a foe. It should seem he suspected him for an enemy, a Goliath that was come to destroy the armies of the living God, and to give him a challenge. Thus apt are we to look upon that as against us, which is most for us. The question plainly implies, that the cause between the Israelites and Canaanites, between Christ and Belzebub, will not admit of a neutrality. He that is not with us is against us.

5. The account he gave of himself, ver. 14. nay, not for your adversaries, you may be sure, but as captain of the host of the Lord; am I now come, not only for you as a friend, but over you, as commander in chief. Here was now, as of old, Gen. xxxii. 2. Mahanaim, two hosts, an host of Israelites ready to engage the Canaanites, and an host of angels to protect them therein; and he is captain of both, conducts the host of Israel, and commands the host of angels to their assistance. Perhaps, in allusion to this, Christ is called the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10. and a leader and commander to the people, Isa. lv. 4. They cannot but be victorious that have such a captain. He now came as captain to review the troops, to animate them, and to give the necessary orders for the besieging of Jericho.

6. The great respect Joshua paid him, when he understood who he was; it is probable not only by what he said, but by some other sensible indications, that he was a divine person, and not a man.

1. Joshua paid homage to him. He fell on his face to the earth, and did worship. Joshua was himself general of the forces of Israel, and yet he was far from looking with jealousy upon this stranger, who produced a commission for captain of the Lord's host above him, he did not offer to dispute his claims, but cheerfully submitted to him as his commander. It will become the greatest of men to be humble and reverent in their addresses to God.

2. He begged to receive commands and directions from him, what saith my Lord unto his servant? His former question was not so bold and soldier-like, but this was as pious and saint-like; nor was it any disparagement to the greatness of Joshua's spirit, thus to humble himself when he has to do with God: even crowned heads cannot bow too low before the throne of the Lord Jesus, who is King of kings, Psal. ii. 10, 11.—lxxii. 10, 11. Observe, 1. The relation he owns between himself and Christ; that Christ was his Lord, and himself his servant, and under his command, Christ his captain, and himself a soldier under him, to do as he is bidden, Matth. viii. 9. Note, The foundation of all acceptable obedience is laid in a sincere dedication of ourselves, as

servants to Jesus Christ as *our Lord*, Psal. xvi. 2. 2. The enquiry he makes, pursuant to this relation, *What saith my Lord?* Which implies an earnest desire to know the will of Christ, and a cheerful readiness and resolution to do it. Joshua owns himself an inferior officer, and stands to receive orders; this temper of mind shews him fit for the post he was in, for those know best how to command that know how to obey.

7. The further expressions of reverence which this divine captain required from Joshua, *ver. 15. Loose thy shoe from off thy foot*, in token of the reverence and respect, which with us is signified by uncovering the head, and as an acknowledgment of a divine presence, which, while it continued there, did in a manner sanctify the place, and dignify it. We use to say of a person we have a great affection for, that we love the very ground he goes upon, thus Joshua must shew his reverence for this divine person, he must not tread the ground he stood on with his dirty shoes, *Ecc. v. 1.* Outward expressions of inward reverence, and a religious awe of God, well become us, and are required of us, whenever we approach to him in solemn ordinances. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that the very same orders God gave to Moses at the bush, when he was sending him to bring Israel out of Egypt, *Exod. iii. 2, 3.* he here gives to Joshua, for the confirming of his faith in the promise he had lately given him, that as he had been with Moses, so he would be with him, *chap. i. 5.* Had Moses such a presence of God with him, as when it became sensible, sanctified the ground? so had Joshua. And (lastly) Hereby he prepares him to receive the instructions he was about to give him, concerning the siege of Jericho, which this captain of the Lord's host was now come to give Israel possession of.

C H A P. VI.

Joshua opened the campaign with the siege of Jericho, a city which could not trust so much to the courage of its people, as to act offensively, and to send out its forces to oppose Israel's landing and encamping, but trusted so much to the strength of its walls, as to stand upon its defence, and not to surrender, or desire conditions of peace: Now here we have the story of the taking of it. 1. The directions and assurances which the captain of the Lord's host gave concerning it, ver. 1—5. 2. The trial of the people's patient obedience in walking round the city six days, ver. 6—14. 3. The wonderful delivery of it into their hands the seventh day, with a solemn charge to them to use it as a devoted thing, ver. 15—21. and ver. 24. 4. The preservation of Rahab and her relations, ver. 22, 23, 25. 5. A curse pronounced upon the man that should dare to rebuild this city, ver. 26, 27. An abstract of this story we find among the trophies of faith, Heb. xi. 30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

1. **N**OW Jericho was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel, none went out, and none came in. 2. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once: thus shalt thou do six days. 4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. 5. And it shall come to pass that when they make a long blast with the rams horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout: and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

We have here a contest between God and the men of Jericho, and their different resolutions, upon which it is easy to say whose word shall prevail.

1. Jericho resolves Israel shall not be its master, *ver. 1.* It was *straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel, it did shut up, and it was shut up.* So it is in the margin, *it did shut up* itself, being strongly fortified, both by art and nature, and it *was shut up* by the obstinacy and resolution of the inhabitants, who agreed never to surrender, or so much as sound a parley; none went out as deserters, or to treat of peace, nor any admitted in to offer peace. Thus were they insatuated, and their hearts hardened to their own destruction, the miserable case and character of all those that *strengthen themselves against the Almighty*, Job xv. 25.

2. God resolves Israel shall be its master, and that quickly. The captain of the Lord's host, here called Jehovah, taking notice how strongly Jericho was fortified, and how strictly guarded, and knowing Joshua's thoughts and cares about reducing it, and perhaps his fears of a disgrace there, and of stumbling at the threshold, gave him here all the assurance he could desire of success, *ver. 2. See I have given into thine hand Jericho.* Not I will do it, but I have done it; it is all thy own, as sure as if it were already in thy possession. It was designed that this city, being the first-

fruits of Canaan, should be intirely devoted to God, and that neither Joshua nor Israel should ever be one mite the richer for it; and yet it is here said to be given into their hand, for we must reckon that most our own which we have an opportunity of honouring God with, and imploying in his service.

Now, 1. The captain of the Lord's host gives directions how the city should be besieged. No trenches are to be opened, no batteries erected, or battering rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made, but the ark of God must be carried by the priests round the city, once a day, for six days together, and seven times the seventh day, attended by the men of war in silence; but the priests all the while blowing with trumpets of rams-horns, *ver. 3, 4.* This was all they were to do.

2. He assures them, that on the seventh day before night, they should, without fail be masters of the town; upon a signal given they must all shout, and immediately the wall should fall down, which would not only expose the inhabitants, but so dispirit them that they would not be able to make any resistance, *ver. 5.* God appointed this way, (1.) To magnify his own power, that he might be *exalted in his own strength*, Psal. xxi. 13. not in the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet further make bare his own almighty arm for the encouragement of Israel, and the terror and confusion of the Canaanites. (2.) To put an honour upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws, by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound veneration and respect. When long after this the ark was brought into the camp without orders from God, it was looked upon as a profanation of it, and the people paid dear for their presumption, *1 Sam. iv. 3.* But now it was done by the divine appointment, it was an honour to the ark of God, and a great encouragement to the faith of Israel. (3.) It was likewise to put honour upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark, and sound the trumpets. Ordinarily the priests were excused from war: that that privilege, with other honours and powers that the law had given them, might not be grudged them; in this service they are principally employed, and so the people are made sensible what blessings they were to the publick, and how well worthy of all the advantages conferred upon them. (4.) It was to try the faith, and obedience, and patience of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept, which to human policy seemed foolish to obey, and believe a promise, which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. They were also proved, whether they could patiently bear the reproaches of their enemies, and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down. (5.) It was to encourage the hope of Israel, with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies, that Canaan could never be conquered, because the cities were *walled up to heaven*, (Deut. i. 28.) would by this be for ever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against omnipotence; they needed not fight, and therefore needed not fear, because God fought for them.

6. ¶ And Joshua, the son of Nun, called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams horns before the ark of the LORD. 7. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD. 8. ¶ And it came to pass when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams horns, passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. 9. ¶ And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the re-reward came after the ark, *the priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets. 10. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout, then shall ye shout. 11. So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. 12. ¶ And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. 13. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams horns before the ark of the LORD, went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them, but the re-reward came after the ark of the LORD, *the priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets. 14. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed

compassed the city seven times. 16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the LORD hath given you the city.

We have here an account of the cavalcade which Israel made about Jericho, the orders Joshua gave concerning it, as he had received them from the Lord, and their punctual observance of these orders. We do not find that he gave the people the express assurances God had given him, that he would deliver the city into their hands; but tried whether they would obey orders with a general confidence, that it would end well, and we find them very observant, both of God and Joshua.

1. Wherever the ark went, the people attended it, *ver. 9.* The armed men went before it to clear the way, not thinking it any disparagement to them, tho' they were men of war, to be pioneers to the ark of God. If any inconvenience should be in crossing all the roads that led to the city, (which they must do in walking round it) they would remove it, if any opposition should be made by the enemy they would encounter it, that the priests march with the ark might be easy and safe. It is an honour to the greatest of men to do any good office to the ark, and to serve the interests of religion in their country: The reward, either another body of armed men, or Dan's Squadron, which marched last through the wilderness, or (as some think) the multitude of the people who were not armed, or disciplined for war (as many of them as would) followed the ark, to testify their respects to it, to grace the solemnity, and to be witnesses of what was done. Every faithful zealous Israelite would be willing to undergo the same fatigues, and run the same hazard with the priests that bear the ark.

2. Seven priests went immediately before the ark, having trumpets in their hands, with which they were continually sounding, *ver. 4, 5, 9, 13.* The priests were God's ministers, and thus in his name, (1.) They proclaimed war with the Canaanites, and so struck a terror upon them; for by terrors upon their spirits they were to be conquered and subdued. Thus God's ministers, by the solemn declarations of his wrath against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, must blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain, that the sinners in Zion may be afraid. They are God's heralds to denounce war against all those that go on still in their trespasses, but say, they shall have peace tho' they go on. (2.) They proclaimed God's gracious presence with Israel, and so put life and courage into them. It was appointed, that when they went to war the priests should encourage them with the assurances of God's presence with them, *Deut. xx. 2, 3, 4.* And particularly their blowing with trumpets was to be a sign to the people that they should be remembered before the Lord their God in the day of battle, *Numb. x. 9.* It encouraged Abijah, *2 Chron. xiii. 12.* Thus God's ministers, by sounding the jubilee trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual warfare.

3. The trumpets they used, were not those silver trumpets which were appointed to be made for their ordinary service, but trumpets of rams horns, bored hollow for the purpose, as some think; these trumpets were of the basest matter, dullest sound, and least shew, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Thus by the foolishness of preaching, fitly compared to the sounding of these rams horns, the Devil's kingdom is thrown down, and the weapons of our warfare, tho' they are not carnal, nor seem to a carnal eye likely to bring any thing to pass, yet they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, *2 Cor. x. 4, 5.* The word here is *trumpets of Jubel*, that is, such trumpets as they used to blow withal in the year of jubilee, so many interpreters understand it, as signifying the compleat liberty to which Israel was now brought, and the bringing of the land of Canaan into the hands of its just and rightful owners.

4. All the people were commanded to be silent, not to speak a word, nor make any noise, *ver. 10.* that they might the more carefully attend to the sound of the sacred trumpets, which they were now to look upon as the voice of God among them, and it doth not become us to speak when God is speaking. It likewise intimates their reverent expectation of the event, *Zech. ii. 13. Be silent, O all flesh before the Lord, Exod. xiv. 14. God shall fight, and you shall hold your peace.*

5. They were to do this once a day for six days together, and did so, and seven times the seventh day, *ver. 14.* God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall upon the first surrounding them, but they must go round them thirteen times before they fall, that they might be kept waiting patiently for the Lord. Tho' they were newly come into Canaan, and their time was very precious, for they had a great deal of work before them, yet they must linger so many days about Jericho, seeming to do nothing, nor to make any progress in their business. As promised deliverances must be expected in God's way, so they must be expected in his time. *He that believes doth not make haste, not more haste than God would have him make. Go yet seven times before any thing hopeful appears, 1 Kings xviii. 43.*

6. One of these days must needs be a sabbath-day, and the Jews say the last was so, but that is not certain; however, if he

that appointed them to rest on the other sabbath-days, appointed them to walk on this, that was sufficient to justify them in it; he never intended to bind himself by his own laws, but that when he pleased he might dispense with them: The impotent man went upon this principle, when he argued; *John v. 11. He that made me whole (and therefore has a divine power) he said unto me, take up thy bed.* And in this case here, it was an honour to the sabbath-day, by which our time is divided into weeks; that just seven days were to be spent in this work, and seven priests were employed to sound seven trumpets; that number being on this occasion, as well as many others, made remarkable, in remembrance of the six days work of creation, and the seventh day's rest from it. And, besides, the law of the sabbath forbids our own work, which is servile and secular, but this which they did was a religious act. It is certainly no breach of the sabbath rest to do the sabbath work, for the sake of which the rest was instituted; and what is the sabbath work but to attend the ark in all its motions?

7. They continued to do this, during the time appointed; and seven times the seventh day, tho' they saw not any effect of it, believing that *at the end the vision would speak and not lie, Heb. ii. 3.* If we persevere in the way of duty we shall lose nothing by it at long run. It is probable, they walked at such a distance from the walls, as to be out of the reach of the enemies arrows, and out of the hearing of their scoffs. We may suppose the oddness of the thing did at first amuse the besieged, but by the seventh day they were grown secure, feeling no harm from that, which perhaps they looked upon as an enchantment: Probably, they bantered the besiegers, as they, *Neh. iv. 2. What do these feeble Jews?* Is this the people we thought so formidable? Are these their methods of attack? Thus they cried peace and safety, that the destruction might be the more terrible when it came. *Wicked men (saith bishop Hall) think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment;* but they will be convinced of their mistake when it is too late.

8. At last they were to give a shout, and did so, and immediately the walls fell, *ver. 16.* This was a shout for mastery, a triumphant shout, the shout of a king is among them, *Numb. xxiii. 21.* This was a shout of faith, they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by that faith they were thrown down. It was a shout of prayer, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise, that God would remember them; with one accord, as one man they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in. Some allude to this, to shew, that we must never expect a compleat victory over our own corruptions till the very evening of our last day, and then we shall shout in triumph over them, *when we come to the number and measure of our perfection,* as bishop Hall expresseth it, *A good heart (saith he) groans under the sense of his infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives and prays; but when all is done, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be;* then judgment shall be brought forth unto victory. And at the end of time, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet, Satan's kingdom shall be compleatly ruined, and not till then, when all opposing rule, principality and power shall be effectually and eternally put down.

17. ¶ And the city shall be accursed, *even* it and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18. And you in any wise keep *your selves* from the accursed thing, lest ye make *your selves* accursed when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass, and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. 20. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight before him, and they took the city. 21. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. 22. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlots house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. 23. And the young men that were spies, went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had: and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. 24. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day: because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent

sent to spy out Jericho. 26. ¶ And Joshua adjured *them* at that time, saying, Cursed *be* the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it. 27. So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country.

The people had religiously observed the orders given them concerning the besieging of Jericho, and now at length Joshua had told them, *ver. 16. The Lord has given you the city*, enter and take possession. Accordingly in these verses we have,

1. The rules they were to observe in taking possession; God gives it them, and therefore may direct it to what uses and intents, and clog it with what proviso's and limitations he thinks fit. It is given to them to be devoted to God, as the first and perhaps the worst of all the cities of Canaan.

(1.) The city must be burnt, and all the lives in it sacrificed without mercy to the justice of God. All this they knew was included in those words, *ver. 17. The city shall be a cherem*, a devoted thing, it and all therein, to the Lord; no life in it might be ransomed upon any terms, they must all be surely *put to death*, *Lev. xxvii. 29.* So he appoints, from whom as creatures they had received their lives, and to whom as sinners they had forfeited them, and who may dispute his sentence? *Is God unrighteous who thus taketh vengeance?* God forbid we should entertain such a thought! There was more of God seen in taking of Jericho, than of any other of the cities of Canaan, and therefore that must be more than any other devoted to him. And the severe usage of this city would strike a terror upon all the rest, and melt their hearts yet more before Israel. Only when this severity is ordered, Rahab and her family are excepted; *she shall live and all that are with her.* She had distinguished herself from her neighbours by the kindness she shewed to Israel, and therefore shall be distinguished from them by the speedy return of that kindness.

(2.) All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things: The Jews say, because the city was taken on the sabbath-day. Thus God would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle: Thus preparation was made for the extraordinary expences of his service, and thus Israel was taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth, nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land *flowing with milk and honey*, not a land abounding with silver and gold, for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries, or to hoard for after times. He would likewise have them reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle; and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth, as if it had been laid up in their own.

A particular caution is given them to take heed of meddling with the forbidden spoil; for what was devoted to God if they offered to appropriate it to their own use, would prove accursed to them; therefore, *ver. 18. in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing*; you will find yourselves inclined to reach towards it, but check yourselves, frighten yourselves from having any thing to do with it. He speaks as if he foresaw the sin of Achan, which we have an account of in the next chapter, when he gives that reason for the caution, lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it, as it proved Achan did.

2. The entrance that was opened to them into the city by the sudden fall of the walls, or at least that part of the wall over-against which they then were when they gave the shout, *ver. 20. The wall fell down flat*, and probably killed abundance of people; the guards that stood centinel upon it, or others that crowded upon it, to look at the Israelites that were walking round: We read of thousands killed by the fall of a wall, *1 Kings xx. 30.* That which they trusted to for defence proved their destruction. The sudden fall of the wall, no doubt, put the inhabitants into such a consternation, that they had no strength nor spirit to make any resistance, but they became an easy prey to the sword of Israel, and saw to how little purpose it was to shut their gates against a people that had *the Lord on the head of them*, *Mic. ii. 13.* Note, The God of heaven easily can and certainly will break down all the opposing power of his and his church's enemies. Gates of brass and bars of iron are before him but as *straw and rotten wood*, *Isa. xlv. 1, 2. Who will bring me into the strong city? will not thou, O God? Psal. lx. 9, 10.* Thus shall Satan's kingdom fall, nor shall any prosper that harden themselves against God.

3. The execution of the orders given concerning this devoted city. 1. All that breathed were put to the sword; not only the men that were found in arms, but the women and children, and old people. Tho' they cried quarter, and begged never so earnestly for their lives, there was no room for compassion, pity must be forgotten, they *utterly destroyed all*, *ver. 21.* If they had not had a divine warrant under the seal of miracles for this execution, it could not have been justified, nor can it justify the like now, when we are sure no such warrant can be produced. But being appointed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth to do it, who

is not unrighteous in taking vengeance, they are to be applauded in doing it as the faithful ministers of his justice. Work for God was then bloody work, and *curse was he that did it deceitfully, keeping back his sword from blood*, *Jer. xlviii. 10.* But the spirit of the gospel is very different, for Christ came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them, *Luke ix. 56.* Christ's victories were of another nature. The cattle were put to death with the owners, as additional sacrifices to the divine justice: The cattle of the Israelites, when slain at the altar, were accepted as sacrifices for them, but the cattle of those Canaanites were required to be slain as sacrifices with them, for their iniquity was not to be purged with sacrifice and offering: both were for the glory of God. 2. The city was *burnt with fire, and all that was in it*, *ver. 24.* The Israelites perhaps when they had taken Jericho, a large and well built city, hoped they should have that for their head-quarters; but God will have them yet to dwell in tents, and therefore fires this nest, lest they should nestle in it. 3. All the silver and gold, and all those vessels which were capable of being purified by fire were brought into the treasury of the house of the Lord, not that he needed it, but he would be honoured by it, as the Lord of hosts, of their hosts in particular, the God that gives the victory, and therefore might demand the spoil; either the whole as here, or as sometimes a tenth, *Heb. vii. 4.*

4. The preservation of Rahab the harlot, or inn-keeper, who *perished not with them that believed not*, *Heb. xi. 31.* The publick faith was engaged for her safety, by the two spies, who acted therein as publick persons; and therefore tho' the hurry they were in at the taking of the town, no doubt, was very great, yet Joshua took effectual care for her preservation. The same persons that she had secured, were employed to secure her, *ver. 22, 23.* They were best able to do it who knew her and her house, and they were fittest to do it, that it might appear it was for the sake of her kindness to them, that she was thus distinguished, and had her life given her for a prey. All her kindred were saved with her; like Noah she *believed to the saving of her house*; and thus faith in Christ *brings salvation to the house*, *Acts xvi. 31.* Some ask, how her house which is said to have been *upon the wall*, *chap. ii. 15.* escaped falling with the wall; we are sure it did escape, for she and her relations were safe in it; either tho' it joined so near to the wall as to be said to be upon it, yet it was so far off as not to fall either with the wall, or under it, or rather that part of the wall on which her house stood fell not. Now being preserved alive, (1.) She was left for some time without the camp to be purified from her Gentile superstition, which she was to renounce, and to be prepared for her admission as a proselyte. (2.) She was in due time incorporated with the church of Israel, and she and her posterity dwelt in Israel, and her family was remarkable long after. We find her the wife of Salmon, prince of Judah, mother of Boaz, and named among the ancestors of our Saviour, *Mat. i. 5.* Having received Israelites in the name of Israelites, she had an Israelite's reward. Bishop Pierfon observes, that Joshua's saving Rahab the harlot, and admitting her into Israel, was a figure of Christ's receiving and entertaining into his kingdom the publicans and the harlots, *Mat. xxi. 31.* Or it may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles.

5. Jericho is condemned to a perpetual desolation and a curse pronounced upon the man that at any time hereafter should offer to rebuild it, *ver. 26. Joshua adjured them, i. e. the elders and people of Israel*, not only by their own consent, obliging themselves and their posterity never to rebuild this city, but by the divine appointment; God himself having forbidden it under the severe penalty here annexed. (1.) God would hereby shew the weight of a divine curse; where it rests, there is no contending with it, nor getting from under it; it brings ruin without remedy or repair. (2.) He would have it to remain in its ruins a standing monument of his wrath against the Canaanites, when the measure of their iniquity was full; and of his mercy to his people, when the time was come for their settlement in Canaan. The desolations of their enemies were witnesses of his favour to them, and would upbraid them with their ingratitude to that God who had done so much for them. The situation of this city was very pleasant, and probably its nearness to Jordan was an advantage to it, which would tempt men to build upon the same spot, but they are here told it is at their peril if they do it. Men build for their posterity, but he that builds Jericho shall have no posterity to enjoy what he builds; his eldest son shall die when he begins the work, and if he take not warning by that stroke to desist, but will go on presumptuously, the finishing of his work shall be attended with the funeral of his youngest, and we must suppose all the rest cut off between. This curse not being a curse causeless did come upon the man who long after did rebuild Jericho, *1 Kings xvi. 34.* but we are not to think it made the place ever the worse when it was built, or brought any hurt to them that inhabited it: We find Jericho afterwards graced with the presence not only of those two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, but of our blessed Saviour himself, *Luke xix. 1.—xviii. 35. Mat. xx. 29.* Note, It is a dangerous thing to attempt the building up of that which God will have to be destroyed. See *Mal. i. 4.* Lastly, All this magnified Joshua, and raised his reputation, *ver. 27.* it made him not only acceptable to Israel, but formidable to the Canaanites, because it appeared that God was with him.

of a truth: the word of the Lord was with him, so the Chaldee, even Christ himself, the same that was with Moses. Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidences of God's presence with him.

C H A P. VII.

More than once we have found the affairs of Israel, then when they were in the happiest posture, and gave the most hopeful prospects, perplexed and embarrassed by sin, and a stop thereby put to the most promising proceedings. The golden calf, the murmuring at Kadesh, and the iniquity of Peor, had broke their measures, and given them great disturbance; and in this chapter we have such another instance of the interruption given to the progress of their arms by sin: But it being only the sin of one person or family, and soon expiated, the consequences were not so mischievous as of those other; however it served to let them know that they were still upon their good behaviour. We have here, (1.) The sin of Achan in meddling with the accursed thing, ver. 1. (2.) The defeat of Israel before Ai thereupon, ver. 2—5. (3.) Joshua's humiliation and prayer on occasion of that sad disaster, ver. 6—9. (4.) The directions God gave him for the putting away of the guilt, which had provoked God thus to contend with them, ver. 10—15. (5.) The discovery, trial, conviction, condemnation, and execution of the criminal, by which the anger of God was turned away, ver. 16—26. And by this story it appears that, as the law, so Canaan itself made nothing perfect, the perfection both of holiness and peace to God's Israel is to be expected in the heavenly Canaan only.

1. **B**UT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. 2. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east-side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. 3. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up: but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labour thither: for they are but few. 4. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men, and they fled before the men of Ai. 5. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

The story of this chapter begins with a *but*. The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised through all that country, so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun, conquering and to conquer. He did right and observed his orders in every thing, *But the children of Israel committed a trespass*, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name and fame, his wisdom and courage, could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

1. Achan sinning; ver. 1. Here is only a general mention made of the sin, we shall afterwards have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be taking of the accursed thing, in disobedience to the command, and in defiance of the threatening, chap. vi. 18. In sacking of Jericho orders were given that they should neither spare any lives, nor take any treasure to themselves, we read not of the breach of the former prohibition, none to whom they shewed any mercy, but of the latter: Compassion was put off and yielded to the law, but covetousness did not. The love of the world is that root of bitterness which of all other is most hardly rooted up: Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt, we should have heard of it; and it is strange there were no more: The temptation was strong, it was easy to suggest what pity it was that so many things of value should be burnt, to what purpose is this waste? In plundering of cities every man reckons himself entitled to what he can lay his hands on: It was easy to promise themselves secrecy and impunity: Yet by the grace of God such impressions were made upon the minds of the Israelites by the ordinances of God, circumcision and the passover, which they had lately been partakers of, and by the providences of God which had been concerning them, that they stood in awe of the divine precept and judgment, and generously denied themselves, in obedience to their God. And yet tho' it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said to commit the trespass, because one of their body did it, and he was

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not as yet separated from them, nor disowned by them. They did it, *i. e.* by what Achan did, guilt was derived upon the whole society of which he was a member: This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled, or disquieted, Heb. xii. 15. and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in with them lest we share in their guilt. Many a careful tradesman has been broken by a careless partner. And it concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because others sins may redound to our damage.

2. The camp of Israel suffering for the same. *The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*; he saw the offence, tho' they did not, and takes a course to make them see it; for one way or other, sooner or later, secret sins will be brought to light; and if men enquire not after them, God will, and with his enquiries will awaken theirs. Many a community is under guilt and wrath, and is not aware of it, till the fire breaks out: here it brake out quickly.

1. Joshua sends a detachment to seize upon the next city, that was in their way, and that was Ai. Only three thousand men were sent, advice being brought him by his spies that the place was inconsiderable, and needed no greater force for the reduction of it, ver. 2, 3. Now perhaps it was a culpable assurance, or security rather, that they sent so small a party on this expedition, and an indulgence of the people in the love of ease; for they will not have all the people to labour thither: perhaps the people were the less forward to go upon this expedition, because they were denied the plunder of Jericho; and these spies were willing they should be gratified. Whereas when that town was to be taken, tho' God by his own power would throw down the walls, yet they must all labour thither, and labour there too, in walking round it. It did not bode well at all, that God's Israel began to think much of their labour, and contrived how to spare their pains. It is required that we work out our salvation, tho' it is God that works in us. It has likewise often proved of ill consequence to make too light of an enemy. *They are but few*, (say the spies) but as few as they were they were too many for them. It will awaken our care and diligence in our christian warfare, to consider that we wrestle with principalities and powers.

2. This party he sent in their first attack upon the town were repulsed with some loss, ver. 4, 5. *they fled before the men of Ai*, finding themselves unaccountably dispirited, and their enemies to fall out upon them with more vigour and resolution than they expected. In their retreat they had about thirty six men cut off; no great loss indeed out of such a number, but a dreadful surprize to those who had no reason to expect any other in any attack but clear and cheap and certain victory: And now, as it proves, it is well there were but three thousand that fell under this disgrace. Had the body of the army been there; they had been no more able to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served (1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to rejoice with trembling. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast, as he that putteth it off.* (2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them the more secure, notwithstanding the terrors they had been struck with, that their ruin when it came might be the more dreadful. (3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to purge out the old leaven. And this was principally intended in their defeat.

3. The retreat of this party in disorder, put the whole camp of Israel into a fright, *the hearts of the people melted*, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that *the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them*, chap. iii. 10. how can this event be reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them into such a consternation; if God turn to be their enemy and fight against them, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

6. ¶ And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the LORD, until the even-tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. 7. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan. 8. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! 9. For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

We have here an account of the mighty concern Joshua was in upon this sad occasion. He, as a publick person, interested himself more than any other in this publick loss; and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teacheth them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people: he is also a type of

Christ to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, *Psal* lxxii. 14. Observe,

1. How he grieved. He *rent his clothes*, ver. 6. in token of great sorrow, and a deep resentment of the trouble, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it been but the common chance of war (as we are too apt to express it) it had not become a general to droop thus under it: But when God was angry, it was his duty and honour to relent thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was, owned his *flesh trembled for fear of God*, *Psal* cxix. 120. As one *humbling himself under the mighty hand of God he fell to the earth upon his face*, not thinking it any disparagement to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed these reverences, by keeping his eye towards *the ark of the Lord*. The elders of Israel being interested in the cause, and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, *put dust upon their heads*, not only as mourners, but as penitents; not doubting but it was for some sin or other that God did thus contend with them, (tho' they knew not what it was) they *humiliated themselves* before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued *until even-tide*, to shew that it was not the result of a sudden passion, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua did not fall foul upon his spies for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardise, tho' perhaps both were blame-worthy, but *his eye is up to God*; for, *is there any evil in the camp, and he has not done it?* His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

2. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly expostulating the case with God; not fullen and out of humour, as David, when *the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza*, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer, but by giving vent to his trouble in an humble address to God, he keeps his temper, and it ends well.

1. Now he wisheth they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, ver. 7. He thinks it had been better to have staid there and been cut short, than come hither to be cut off. This favours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, tho' the surprize and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the publick interest may in part excuse it. Those words, *wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us*, are too like what the murmurers often said, *Exod* xiv. 11, 12.—xv. 3.—xvi. 3. *Numb* xiv. 2, 3. but he that searcheth the heart knew they came from another spirit, and therefore was not extream to *mark what he said amiss*. Had Joshua considered that this little disorder their affairs were put into, no doubt proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed, and all set to rights again (as often in his predecessor's time) he would not have spoken of it as a thing taken for granted, that they were *delivered into the hand of the Amorites to be destroyed*. God knows what he doth, tho' we do not, but this we may be sure of, he never did, nor ever will, do us any wrong.

2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event, ver. 8. *What shall I say*, what construction can I put upon it, *when Israel*, thy own people for whom thou hast lately done such great things, and to whom thou hast promised the full possession of this land, when they *turn their backs before their enemies*, their *necks*, so the word is; when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power? Is the Lord's arm shortened? of the divine promise? is his word yea and nay? of what God has done for us? shall that be all undone again and prove in vain? Note, The methods of providence are oft intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but *they shall know hereafter*, *John* xiii. 7.

3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined; he gives up all for gone, *the Canaanites shall environ us round*, concluding that now our defence is departed, and the scales are turned in their favours, we shall be in their eyes as contemptible as ever we were formidable, and they shall *cut off our name from the earth*, ver. 9. Thus even good men when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But this comes in here as a plea; Lord, let not Israel's name which has been so *dear to thee* and so *great in the world*, be cut off.

4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined his glory would suffer by it. They will *cut off our name*, saith he, yet as if he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what comes of our little name, the cutting off of that will be a small loss, but *what wilt thou do for thy great name?* This he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation of the calamity, he feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say? Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears, and the return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, *Father, glorify thy name*. The name of God

is a great name, above every name; and whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray that he would, work for his own name that *that may not be polluted*. This should be our concern more than any thing else, on this we must fix our eye, as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes: we cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, *What wilt thou do for thy great name?* Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

10. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11. Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant, which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. 12. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from amongst you. 13. Up, sanctifie the people, and say, Sanctifie your selves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel. There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. 14. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be that the tribe which the LORD taketh, shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take, shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take, shall come man by man. 15. And it shall be that he that is taken with the accursed thing, shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which we may suppose came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself, ver. 6. Those that desire to know the will of God, must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates, for wisdom's dictates, *Prov* viii. 34. And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure, never complain of him, but complain to him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, *while he was yet speaking*, *Isa* lxv. 24. as that to Daniel, *chap* ix. 20.

1. God encourageth Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs, ver. 10. *Get thee up*, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus, *wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?* No doubt, Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did under the tokens of his displeasure, but now God tells him, it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the griefs of penitents when they afflict their souls, further than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. *Arise, shake thy self from the dust*, *Isa* lii. 2. Joshua continued his mourning *till even-tide*, ver. 6. so late that they could do nothing that night towards the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (*chap* ix. 21.) and Ezra (*chap* ix. 5, 6.) continued their mourning only *till the time of the evening sacrifice*; that revived them both, but Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused. *Get thee up*, do not lie all night there. Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel, *Deut* ix. 18. Joshua must get up because he has other work to do, than to lie there, the accursed thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds, and put on his judge's robes, and *clad himself with zeal as a cloak*; weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion jumble out another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shechaniah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See *Ezra* x. 2, 3, 4.

2. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shews him wherefore he contended with them, ver. 11. *Israel has sinned*. Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail, no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours, and has made this breach upon you. The sinner is not named, tho' the sin is described, but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their *godly sorrow* have so wrought a *clearing of themselves*, as theirs did, *2 Cor* vii. 11. Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceeding sinful, (1.) *They have transgressed my covenant*, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed, that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan, but in robbing God of his

part they *transgressed this covenant*. (2.) They have even taken of the devoted thing, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against him, that should dare to break in upon God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable. (3.) They have also stolen, they did it clandestinely as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, *The Lord shall not see*, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. Thus thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself. (4.) They have *dissembled* also. Probably, when the action was over, Joshua called all the tribes, and asked them, whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil, according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, they should discover it, but Achan joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulterous woman that *eats and wipes her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness*. Nay, (5.) They have put the accursed thing among their own goods, as if they had as good a title to that as to any thing they have; never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, tho' a wife and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of, till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of. God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but doth not. (1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal. (2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession. Joshua, no doubt, proclaimed it presently throughout the camp, that there was such a transgression committed, upon which, if Achan had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which *accepted of a trespass-offering*, with restitution from those that had *sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law*, Lev. v. 15, 16. But Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him, evidenced the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

3. He awakens him to enquire further into it, by telling him, (1.) That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accursed thing was put away, he need not fear, all would be well, the stream of their successes, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever. (2.) That if this accursed thing were not destroyed, they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, *neither will I be with you any more as I have been; except ye destroy the accursed, i. e. the accursed person, who is made so by the accursed thing*. That which is accursed will be destroyed, and they whom God has intrusted to bear the sword, bear it in vain, if they make it not a terror to that wickedness which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and unless we do that, we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know, it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and if that be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally.

4. He directs him in what method to make this enquiry and prosecution. (1.) He must *sanctify the people*, now over night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to *sanctify themselves*, ver. 13. And what can either magistrates, or ministers, do more towards sanctification? They must put themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God, and submit to the divine scrutiny; must examine themselves, now God was coming to examine them, must *prepare to meet their God*. They were called to sanctify themselves, when they were to *receive the divine law*, Exod. xix. And now also when they were to *come under the divine judgment*, for in both God is to be attended with the utmost reverence. There is an *accursed thing in the midst of thee*, and therefore *sanctify your selves, i. e.* Let all that are innocent be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves: the sins of others may be improved by us, as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian, occasioned a blessed reformation in that church, 2 Cor. vii. 11. John. xvii. 8. (2.) He must bring them all under the scrutiny of the lot, ver. 14. the tribe which the guilty person was of should first be discovered by lot, then the family, then the household, and last of all the person. The conviction came upon him thus, gradually, that he might have some space given him to come in and surrender himself, for God is *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. Observe, The Lord is said to take the tribe, and family, and household, on which the lot fell; because the disposal of the lot is of the Lord, and however casual it seem, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice: and to shew, that when the sin of sinners finds them out, God is to be acknowledged in it; it is he that seizeth them, and the arrests are in his name. *God has found out the iniquity of thy servants*, Gen. xlv. 16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God doth, and will, distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that tho' for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand will effectually provide for the taking out of the precious from the vile, so that tho' the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the wicked, yet they shall never be treated as the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25.

(3.) When the criminal was found out, he must be put to death *without mercy*, (Heb. x. 28.) and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, ver. 15. He and all that he has must be burnt with fire, that there might be no remainders of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence is, because the criminal has (1.) Given a great affront to God, he has *transgressed the covenant of the Lord*, who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant. (2.) He has done a great injury to the church of God, he has *wrought folly in Israel*, hath shamed that nation, which is looked upon by all its neighbours to be a *wise and an understanding people*; hath infected that nation, which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation which he is the protector of. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was SACRILEGE, it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use, that which was devoted to his glory, and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary, that was to be thus severely punished, for warning to all people in all ages, to take heed how they rob God.

16. ¶ So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: 17. And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: 18. And he brought his household man by man; and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me. 20. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. 21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them, and behold, they are hid in the earth, in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. 22. ¶ So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent, and behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. 24. And Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. 26. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day: So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger: wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

We have in these verses,

1. The discovery of Achan, by the lot, which proved a perfect lot, tho' it proceeded gradually. Tho' we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with the more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body which under God he was the head of, and was put into a certain method of cure, yet he *rose up early in the morning*, ver. 16. so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser, here it shews his zeal, and vehement desire, to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe, (1.) That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes the most honourable and illustrious; this was an allay to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride: many there were which were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange if there be those found in them, and descending from them, that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have the first and largest lot in Canaan, the more inexcusable is one of that tribe, if not content to wait for his own share, he break in upon God's property. The Jews tradition is, that when the tribe of Judah was taken, the valiant men of that tribe drew their swords, and professed they would not sheath them again till they saw the criminal punished, and themselves cleared that knew their own innocency. (2.) That the guilty person was at length fastened upon, and the language of the lot was, *thou art the man*, ver. 18. It was strange that Achan, being conscious to himself of guilt, when he saw the lot come nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to make an escape, or the grace to make a confession; but *his heart was*

hardened

hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and it proved to be to his own destruction. We may well imagine how his countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him when he was singled out, as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, *have we found thee, O our enemy?* See here, 1. The folly of those that promise themselves secrecy in sin: the righteous God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to shame and ruin those that continue their fellowship with those unfruitful works. *A bird of the air*, when God pleases, shall carry the voice, Eccles. x. 20. See Psal. xciv. 7. &c. 2. How much it is our concern when God is contending with us, to find out what the cause of action is, what the particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our camp. We must thus examine ourselves, and carefully review the records of conscience, that we may find out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with holy Job, *Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Discover the traitor, and he shall be no longer harboured.

2. His arraignment and examination, ver. 19. Joshua sits judge, and tho' abundantly satisfied in his guilt, by the determination of the lot, yet urges him to make a penitent confession, that his soul might be saved by it, in the other world, tho' he could not give him any encouragement to hope that he should save his life by it. Observe, 1. How he bespeaks him, with the greatest mildness and tenderness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He might justly have called him thief, and rebel, *Raca*, and thou fool; but he calls him son; he might have adjured him to confess, as the high-priest did our blessed Saviour, or threatened him with the torture, to extort a confession, but for love's sake he rather beseecheth him, *I pray thee make confession.* This is an example to all not to insult over those that are in misery, tho' they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness; but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing what we ourselves should have been and done, if God had put us into the hand of our own counsels. It is likewise an example to magistrates, in executing justice to govern their own passions with a strict and prudent hand, and never suffer themselves to be transported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or language, no not towards those that have given the greatest provocations. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* Let them remember the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his anger. This is the likeliest method of bringing offenders to repentance. 2. What he bespeaks him to do; to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in God's stead, so that in confessing to him he confessed to God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua, and the congregation concerning that which was laid to his charge; his confession would also be an evidence of his repentance, and a warning to others to take heed of sinning after the similitude of his transgression: but that which Joshua aims at herein, is, that God might be honoured by it, as the Lord, the God of infinite knowledge and power, from whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel, who as he doth particularly resent affronts given to his Israel, so he doth the affronts given him by Israel. Note, In confessing sin as we take shame to ourselves, so we give glory to God, as a righteous God, owning him justly displeased with us, and as a good God, who will not improve our confessions as evidences against us, but is faithful and just to forgive, then when we are brought to own that he would be faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have injured God in his honour, Christ by his death has made satisfaction for the injury; but it is required, that we by repentance shew our good will to his honour, and as far as in us lies give glory to him. Bishop Patrick quotes the Samaritan chronicle, making Joshua to say, here to Achan, *Lift up thine eyes to the King of heaven and earth, and acknowledge that nothing can be hid from him who knoweth the greatest secrets.*

3. His confession, which now at last, when he saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was free and ingenuous enough, ver. 20, 21. Here is, 1. A penitent acknowledgment of the fault. Indeed I have sinned, what I am charged with is too true to be denied, and too bad to be excused, I own it, I lament it, the Lord is righteous in bringing it to light, for indeed I have sinned. This is the language of a penitent that is sick of his sin, and whose conscience is loaded with it. I have nothing to accuse any one else of, but a great deal to say against myself, it is with me that the accursed thing is found, I am the man who have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not. And that wherewith he aggravates the sin is, that it was committed against the Lord God of Israel: He was himself an Israelite, a sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their privileges, so that in offending the God of Israel he offended his own God, which laid him under the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude imaginable. 2. A particular narrative of the fact, *thus and thus have I done.* God had told Joshua in general, that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but leaves it to him to draw from Achan an account of the particulars for one way or other God will make sinners own tongues to fall upon themselves, (Psal. lxiv. 8.) if ever he bring them to repentance, they will be their own accusers, and their awakened consciences will be instead of a thousand witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confession of their sin to God, to be very particular; not only I have sinned, but in this and

that instance I have sinned; reflecting with regret upon all the steps that led to the sin, and all the circumstances that aggravated it and made it exceeding sinful; *thus and thus have I done.* He confesseth (1.) To the things taken. In plundering a house in Jericho he found a goodly Babylonish garment, the word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably, it belonged to the king of Jericho, it was far fetched, if fetched, as we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of divers colours, so some render it; whatever it was, in his eyes made a very glorious shew; a thousand pities (thinks Achan) that it should be burnt, then it will do no body any good, if I take it for myself, it will serve me many a year for my best coat; under these pretences he makes bold with this first, and thinks it no harm to save it from the fire; but his hand being thus in, he proceeds to take a bag of money, *two hundred shekels*, i. e. one hundred ounces of silver, and a *wedge of gold*, which weighed *fifty shekels*, i. e. twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that in taking of these, he saved them from the fire, for the silver and gold were to be laid up in the treasury, but they that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin, will have their hearts so hardened by that, that they will venture upon the next without such an excuse; for the way of sin is down-hill. See what a poor prize it was, for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unspeakable loser he was by the bargain. See Matth. xvi. 26. (2.) He confesseth the manner of taking them. 1. The sin began in the eye. He saw these fine things, as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes; and what need we have to make this covenant with our eyes, that if they wander they shall be sure to weep for it. *Look not thou upon the wine that is red*, upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offends thee, to prevent the necessity of plucking it out, and casting it from thee, Matth. v. 28, 29. 2. It proceeded out of the heart. He owns I coveted them. Thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. They that would be kept from sinful actions, must mortify and check in themselves sinful desires, particularly, the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call covetousness. O what a world of evil is the love of money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of faith, he would have seen them accursed things, and would have dreaded them, but looking upon them with an eye of sense, only he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking, but the lusting that ruined him. 3. When he had committed it, he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing, lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he hid them in the earth, as one that resolved to keep what he had got, and never to make restitution. Thus doth Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon him. See the deceitfulness of sin, that which is pleasing in the commission is bitter in the reflection; at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill gotten goods, and how they will be cheated that rob God, Job xx. 15. *He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again.*

4. His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot, he had convicted himself by his own confession; but that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him further convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the messengers made that were sent to search, they ran to the tent, ver. 22. Not only to shew their readiness to obey Joshua's orders, but to shew how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. They that feel themselves under wrath, find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is no time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought, they were laid out before the Lord, ver. 23. That all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God's judgment, in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord, they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God, do but deceive themselves, what is taken from him, he will recover, Hos. ii. 9. and will be a loser by no man at last.

5. His condemnation. Joshua passeth sentence upon him, ver. 25. *Why hast thou troubled us?* There is the ground of the sentence, *O how much hast thou troubled us!* So some read it. He refers to what was said, when the warning was given, not to meddle with the accursed thing, chap. vi. 18. *left ye make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.* Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to the sinner himself, but to all about him. He that is greedy of gain, as Achan was, troubleth his own house, Prov. xv. 27. and all the communities he belongs to. Now (saith Joshua) God shall trouble thee. See why Achan was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, *Achan, the troubler of Israel*, as Ahab, 1 Kings xviii. 18. This therefore is his doom, *God shall trouble thee.* Note,

Note, The righteous God will certainly recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, 2 Thes. i. 6. Those that are troubled some shall be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word, which determines the troubling of him to this day, infer, that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed that the spirit might be saved, and if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description, both of his sin, and of his punishment, by the trouble that was in both, there is a plain allusion to his name Achan, or, as he is called, 1 Chron. ii. 7. Achar, which signifies trouble. He did too much answer his name.

6. His execution. No reprieve could be obtained, a gangrened member must be cut off presently. When he is proved to be an anathema, and the troubler of the camp, we may suppose all the people cry out against him, *Away with him, away with him; Stone him, stone him!* Here is, 1. the place of execution. They brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting far from them that wicked person, 1 Cor. v. 13. When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by his trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing *without the gate*, bearing our reproach, Heb. xiii. 12, 13. The execution was at a distance, that the camp which was disturbed by Achan's sin, might not be defiled by his death. 2. The persons employed in his execution, it was the act of all Israel, ver. 24, 25. They were all spectators of it, that they might see and fear, publick executions are publick examples; nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as could were active in it, in token of the universal detestation they conceived of his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God's displeasure against them. 3. The partakers with him in the punishment, for he perished not alone in his iniquity, chap. xxii. 20. (1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried in the ashes of the rest of his goods, under the heap of stones, so as never to be put to any other use. (2.) All his other goods were destroyed likewise, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his oxen, asses, and sheep, to shew, that goods got unjustly, especially if they be got by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a coal of fire with it, which burnt her nest, Hab. ii. 9, 10. Zech. v. 5. They lose their own, that grasp at more than their own. (3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were brought out (ver. 24.) only to be the spectators of their father's punishment, but most conclude that they died with him, and that they must be meant, ver. 25. where it is said, they burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. God had expressly provided that magistrates should not put the children to death for the father's sin, but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered, ver. 15. that the criminal, and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villainy, had helped to carry off the accursed things. It is very probable, they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent, but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became accessories *ex post facto*; and if they were never so little partakers in the crime, it was so heinous, that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However, God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed, was thus made the more tremendous. 4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him. He was stoned, some think as a sabbath-breaker, supposing that the sacrilege was committed on the sabbath-day, and then his dead body was burnt, as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution, teaches us how much it is the interest of a nation, that all in it shall contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppressing of vice and prophaneness, and the reformation of manners; sin is a reproach to any people, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it. 5. The pacifying of God's wrath hereby, ver. 26. The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. The putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is a sure and most effectual way to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

7. The record of his conviction and execution, care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it for warning and instruction to posterity: 1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one, perhaps of the congregation, throwing a stone to the heap, in token of his detestation of the crime. 2. A new name was given to the place, it was called, the Valley of Achor, or Trouble. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan's name, and a perpetual warning to all people, not to invade God's property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua's government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were minded to observe, at their peril, the proviso's and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The Valley of Achor is said to be given for a Door of Hope, because when we put away the accursed thing, then there begins to be hope in Israel, Hos. ii. 15. Ezra x. 2.

C H A P. VIII.

The embarrassment which Achan's sin gave to the affairs of Israel being over, we have them here in a very good posture again, the affairs both of war and religion. Here is, (1.) The glorious progress of their arms in the taking of Ai, before which they had lately received a disgrace. 1. God encourageth Joshua to attack it, with the assurance of success, and directs him what method to take, ver. 1, 2. 2. Joshua gives orders accordingly to the men of war, ver. 3—9. 3. The stratagem is managed as it was projected, and succeeds as it was desired, ver. 9—22. 4. Joshua becomes master of this city, puts all the inhabitants to the sword, burns it, hangs the king, but gives the plunder to the soldiers, ver. 23—29. (2.) The great solemnity of writing and reading the law before a general assembly of all Israel, drawn up for that purpose upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, according to an order which Moses had received from the Lord, and delivered to them, ver. 30—35. Thus did they take their work before them, and made the business of their religion to keep pace with their secular business.

1. **A**ND the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land. 2. And thou shalt do to Ai and her king, as thou didst unto Jericho, and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof shall ye take for a prey unto your selves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

Israel was very happy in having such a commander as Joshua, but Joshua was more happy in having such a director as God himself, when any difficulty occurred, he needed not to call a council of war, who had God so nigh unto him, not only to answer, but even to prevent his enquiries. It should seem Joshua was now at a stand, had scarce recovered the discomposure he was put into by the trouble Achan gave them, could not think, without fear and trembling, of pushing forward, lest there should be in the camp another Achan; then God spake to him, either by vision, as before, chap. v. as a man of war with his sword drawn, or by the breast-plate of judgment. Note, When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing, which separates between us and God, then, and not till then, we may expect to hear from God to our comfort; and God's directing us how to go on in our christian work and warfare, is a good evidence of his being reconciled to us. Observe here,

1. The encouragement God gives to Joshua to proceed; *Fear not, neither be thou dismayed*, ver. 1. This intimates, that the sin of Achan, and the consequences of it, had been a very great discouragement to Joshua, and made his heart almost ready to fail. Corruptions within the church weaken the hands, and damp the spirits of her guides and helpers, more than oppositions from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than malicious Canaanites. But God bids Joshua not be dismayed, the same power that keeps Israel from being ruined by their enemies, shall keep them from ruining themselves. To animate him, (1.) He assures him of success against Ai, tells him it is all his own, but he must take it as God's gift, *I have given it into thy hand*, which secured him both title and possession, and obliged him to give God the glory of both, Psal. xlv. 3. (2.) He allows the people to take the spoil to themselves. Here the spoil was not consecrated to God as that of Jericho, and therefore there was no danger of the peoples committing such a trespass as they had committed there. Observe, how Achan, who caught at forbidden spoil, lost that, and life, and all, but the rest of the people who had conscientiously refrained from the accursed thing, were presently recompensed for their obedience with the spoil of Ai; the way to have the comfort of what God allows us, is to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial, let God have his dues first, and then *all will be clean to us*, and sure, 1 Kings xvii. 13. God did not bring them to these goodly cities, and houses filled with all good things, to tantalize them with the sight of that which they might not touch; but having received the first-fruits from Jericho, the spoil of Ai, and of all the cities which from henceforward came into their hands, they might take for a prey to themselves.

2. The direction he gives him in attacking Ai. It must not be such a work of time, as the taking of Jericho was, that would have prolonged the war too much; they that had patiently waited seven days for Jericho, shall have Ai given them in one day. Nor was it as that, to be taken by miracle, and purely by the act of God, but now their own conduct and courage must be exercised; having seen God work for them, they must now bestir themselves. God directs him, 1. To take all the people, that they might all be spectators of the action, and sharers in the spoil. Hereby God gave him a tacit rebuke, for sending so small a detachment against Ai, in the former attempt upon it, chap. vii. 4. 2. To lay an

ambush behind the city, this was a method which perhaps Joshua had not thought of at this time, if God had not directed him to it; and tho' now we are not to expect direction, as here by visions, voices, or oracles, yet whenever those who are intrusted with publick counsels, take prudent measures for the publick good; it must be acknowledged that God *puts it into their hearts*, he that teacheth the husbandman discretion, no doubt, teacheth the statesman and general.

3. ¶ So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: 5. And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6. (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. 7. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8. And it shall be when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. 9. ¶ Joshua therefore sent them forth; and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west-side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbred the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11. And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai. 12. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west-side of the city. 13. And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city: Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. 14. ¶ And it came to pass when the king of Ai saw it, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him, behind the city. 15. And Joshua, and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16. And all the people that *were* in Ai, were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. 17. And there was not a man left in Ai, or Beth-el, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. 18. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy hand, toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand toward the city. 19. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hastened, and set the city on fire. 20. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness, turned back upon the pursuers. 21. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. 22. And the other issued out of the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side, and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain, or escape.

We have here an account of the taking of Ai by stratagem. The stratagem here used, we are sure, was lawful and good, God himself appointed it, and we have no reason to think, but that the like is lawful and good in other wars. Here was no league broken, no oath or promise violated, nor any thing like it, it was not by the pretence of a parley, or treaty of peace, that the advantage was gained, no, these are sacred things, and not to be jested with, nor used to serve a turn; truth, when once it is plighted, becomes

a debt, even to an enemy. But in this stratagem here was no untruth told, nothing was concealed but their own counsels, which no enemy ever pretended a right to be intrusted with, nothing was dissembled, nothing counterfeited but a retreat, which was no natural or necessary indication at all of their inability to maintain their onset, or of any design not to renew it; the enemy ought to have been upon their guard, and to have kept within the defence of their own walls; common prudence, had they been governed by it, would have directed them not to venture the pursuit of an army which they saw was so far superior to them in numbers, and to leave their city unguarded; but (*si populus vult decipi, decipiat*) if the Canaanites will be so easily imposed upon, and, in pursuit of God's Israel, will break through all the laws of policy and good management, the Israelites are not at all to be blamed for taking advantage of their fury and incogitancy, nor is it any way inconsistent with the character God is pleased to give of them, that they are *children that will not lie*.

Now in the account here given of this matter,

1. There is something of difficulty in adjusting the numbers that were employed to effect it. Mention is made, *ver. 3.* of *thirty thousand*, that were *chosen and sent away by night*, to whom the charge was given to surprize the city, as soon as ever they perceived it was evacuated, *ver. 4, 7, 8.* And yet afterwards, *ver. 12.* it is said, Joshua took five thousand men and set them to lie in ambush behind the city, and that *ambush entered the city*, and *set it on fire*, *ver. 19.* Now, (1.) Some think there were two parties sent out to lie in ambush, thirty thousand first, and afterwards five thousand to guard the roads, and to intercept those of the city that might think to save themselves by flight, or to strengthen those that were first sent out; and that Joshua made his open attack upon the city, with all the thousands of Israel. So the learned bishop Patrick, insisting upon God's command, *ver. 1.* to take *all the people of war with him*. But, (2.) Others think that all the people were taken only to encamp before the city, and that out of them Joshua chose out thirty thousand men to be employed in the action, out of which he sent out five thousand to lie in ambush, which were as many as could be supposed to march *incognito*, and more would have been discovered, and the design broken; and that then with the other twenty five thousand he made the open attack, as Mafius thinks, or with the thirty thousand, which, as Calvin thinks, he kept entire for that purpose, having besides them sent out five thousand for an ambuscade. And those five thousand (they think) must be meant by them, *ver. 3.* which he *sent away by night*, with orders to lie in wait behind the city, tho' the particular number be not specified till, *ver. 12.* If we may admit such a seeming disturbance in the order of the narrative (of the like to which, perhaps, instances might be given in the other scripture histories) it seems most probable that there was but one ambushment, which consisted only of five thousand, enough for such a purpose.

2. Yet the principal parts of the story are plain enough, that a detachment being secretly marched behind the city, on the other side to that, on which the main body of the army lay, the situation of the country, it is probable, favouring their concealment, Joshua, and the forces with him, faced the city, the garrison made a vigorous sally out upon them, whereupon they withdrew, gave ground, and retreated in some seeming disorder towards the wilderness; which the men of Ai being aware of, drew out all the force they had to pursue them: This gave a fair opportunity for them that lay in ambush to make themselves masters of the city, whereof when they had given notice by a smoke to Joshua, he, with all his force, returned upon the pursuers, who now, when it was too late, were aware of the snare they were drawn into, but their retreat being intercepted, they were every man of them cut off. The like artifice we find used, *Judg. xx. 30, &c.*

Now in this story, we may observe,

1. What a brave commander Joshua was. See (1.) His conduct and prudence. God gave him the hint, *ver. 2.* that he should lay an ambush behind the city, but left him to himself to order the particulars, which he did admirably well. Doubtless, *Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men*, Eccl. vii. 19. (2.) His care and industry, *ver. 10.* He rose up early in the morning, that he might lose no time, and to shew how intent his mind was upon his business. Those that would maintain their spiritual conflicts, must not love their ease. (3.) His courage and resolution, tho' an army of Israelites had been repulsed before Ai, yet he resolves to lead them on in person the second time, *ver. 5.* Being himself also an elder, he took the elders of Israel with him to make this attack upon the city, *ver. 10.* as if he were going rather to sit in judgment upon them as criminals, than to fight them as enemies. (4.) His caution and consideration, *ver. 13.* He went that night into the midst of the valley, to make the necessary dispositions for an attack, and to see that every thing was in good order. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick, that he went into the valley alone to pray to God for a blessing upon his enterprize, and he did not seek in vain. (5.) His constancy and perseverance, when he had stretched out his spear towards the city, *ver. 18.* (a spear almost as fatal and formidable to the enemies of Israel as the rod of Moses was) he never drew back his hand till the work was done. His hands in fighting

ing like Moses's in interceding were steady to the going down of the sun. Those that have stretched out their hands against their spiritual enemies must never draw them back. Lastly, What Joshua did in the stratagem, is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered, so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death had triumphed over him, and as if he and all his interests had been routed and ruined, but in his resurrection he rallied again, and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; broke the serpent's head, by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem.

2. What an obedient people Israel was, what *Joshua commanded them to do according to the commandment of the Lord*, ver. 8. they did it without murmuring or disputing. They that were sent to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai (two cities confederate against them) were in a post of danger, and had they been discovered, might all have been cut off, and yet they ventured it; and when the body of the army retreated and fled, it was both disgraceful and perillous, and yet in obedience to Joshua they did it.

3. What an infatuated enemy the king of Ai was, (1.) That he did not by his scouts discover those that lay in ambush behind the city, ver. 14. Some observe it as a remarkable instance of the power of God in making men blind to their own interest; and the things that belong to their peace, that he wist not that there were liars in wait against him. They are most in danger who are least aware that they are so. (2.) That when Israel seemed to fly, he drew out all his forces to pursue them, and left none to guard his city, and to secure his retreat, ver. 17. Thus the church's enemies often run themselves into destruction by their own fury, and the violence of their rage against the Israel of God. Pharaoh plunged himself into the Red-sea by the eagerness of his pursuit of Israel. (3.) That from the killing of thirty-six men out of three thousand, when Israel made the former attack upon his city, he should infer the total routing of so great an army as now he had to deal with, ver. 6. *They flee before us as at the first.* See how the prosperity of fools destroys them, and hardens them to their ruin. God has made use of the men of Ai as a scourge to chastise his people for meddling with the accursed thing, and this had puffed them up with a conceit; that they must have the honour of delivering their country from these formidable invaders; but they were soon made to see their mistake; and that when the Israelites had reconciled themselves to their God they could have no power against them. God had made use of them only for the rebuking of Israel, with a purpose, when the correction was over, to throw the rod itself into the fire, *howbeit, they meant not so, but it was in their heart to destroy and cut off*, Isa. x. 5, 6, 7.

4. What a compleat victory Israel obtained over them by the favour and blessing of God. Each did their part, the divided forces of Israel by signals agreed on understood one another, and every thing succeeded according to the project, so that the men of Ai, then when they were most confident of victory, found themselves surrounded, so that they had neither spirit to resist, nor room to fly, but were under a fatal necessity of yielding their lives to the destroyers: And now it is hard to say, whether the shouts of the men of Israel, or the shrieks of the men of Ai were the louder, but easy to imagine what terror and confusion they were filled with, when their highest assurances sunk so suddenly into the heaviest despair. Note, The triumphing of the wicked is short, *Job* xx. 5. They are *exalted for a little while*, that their fall and ruin may be the forer, *Job* xxiv. 24. See how easily, how quickly, the scale turns against them that have not God on their side.

23. And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. 24. And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai, in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. 25. And so it was that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, *even* all the men of Ai. 26. For Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27. Only the cattle and the spoil of that city, Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD, which he commanded Joshua. 28. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, *even* a desolation unto this day. 29. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones *that remaineth* unto this day.

We have here an account of the improvement which the Israelites made of their victory over Ai.

1. They put all to the sword, not only in the field, but in the city, man, woman, and child, none of them remained, ver. 24.

God, the righteous judge, had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of his justice, and the executioners of his doom. Once in this story, and but once, mention is made of the men of Beth-el, as confederates with the men of Ai, ver. 17. Tho' they had a king of their own, and were not subjects to the king of Ai, for the king of Beth-el is reckoned among the thirty one kings that Joshua destroyed, chap. xii. 16. Yet Ai being a stronger place, they threw themselves into that, for their own safety, and the strengthening of their neighbours hands, and so (we may presume) were all cut off with them; thus, that by which they hoped to prevent their own ruin hastened it. The whole number of the slain it seems was but twelve thousand, an inconsiderable body to make head against all the thousands of Israel; but whom God will destroy he infatuates. Here it is said, ver. 26. that *Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear*; ver. 18. till the slaughter was compleated. Some think the spear he stretched out, was not to slay the enemies, but to animate and encourage his own soldiers, some flag or ensign being hung out at the end of this spear, and observe it as an instance of his self-denial; that tho' the fire of courage wherewith his breast was filled, would have pushed him forward, sword in hand into the hottest of the action, yet in obedience to God he kept the inferior post of a standard-bearer, and did not quit it till the work was done. By the spear stretched out, he directed the people to expect their help from God; and to him to give the praise.

2. They plundered the city, and took all the spoil to themselves, ver. 27. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just; the spoil they brought out of Egypt, by borrowing of their neighbours, was much of it expended upon the tabernacle they had reared in the wilderness, for which they are now reimbursed with interest. The spoil here taken, it is probable, was all brought together, and distributed by Joshua in due proportions; as that of the Midianites was, *Numb.* xxxi. 26, &c. And it was not catch as catch could, for God is the God of order and equity, and not of confusion.

3. They laid the city in ashes, and left it to remain so, ver. 28. Israel must yet dwell in tents, and therefore this city, as well as Jericho, must be burnt. And tho' there was no curse entailed upon him that should rebuild it, yet it seems it was not rebuilt, unless it be the same with Aija, which we read of long after, *Neh.* xi. 31. Some think it was not rebuilt, because Israel had received a defeat before it, the remembrance of which should be buried in the ruins of the city.

4. The king of Ai was taken prisoner, and cut off, not by the sword of war, as a soldier, but by the sword of justice, as a malefactor. Joshua ordered him to be hanged, and his dead body thrown at the gate of his own city, *under a heap of stones*, ver. 23, 29. Some particular reason, no doubt, there was for this severity against the king of Ai; it is likely he had been notoriously wicked and vile, and a blasphemier of the God of Israel, perhaps, upon occasion of the repulse he had given to the forces of Israel in their first onset. Some observe, that his dead body was thrown at the gate where he had been wont to sit in judgment, that so much the greater contempt might thereby be poured upon the dignity he had been proud of, and he might be punished for the unrighteous decrees he had made in the very place where he had made them. Thus the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

30. ¶ Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal. 31. As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up *any* iron: and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the LORD and sacrificed peace-offerings. 32. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. 33. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark, and on that side, before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizzim, and half of them over against mount Ebal: as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all *that is* written in the book of the law. 35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

This religious solemnity which we have here an account of, comes in somewhat surprizingly in the midst of the history of the wars of Canaan. After the taking of Jericho and Ai, we would have

have expected that the next news should have been of their taking possession of the country, the pushing on of their victories in other cities, and the carrying of the war into the bowels of the nation; now they had made themselves masters of these frontier towns: But here a scene opens of quite another nature, the camp of Israel is drawn out into the field, not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifices, to hear the law read, and to say Amen to the blessings and curses. Some think this was not done till after some of the following victories were obtained, which we read of, *chap. x. and xi.* But it should seem by the maps, that Shechem (near to which these two mountains, Gerizzim and Ebal, were) was not so far off from Ai, but that when they had taken that, they might penetrate into that country as far as those two mountains, and therefore I would not willingly admit a transposition of the story; and the rather, because as it comes in here, it is a remarkable instance, (1.) Of the zeal of Israel for the service of God, and for his honour. Tho' never was war more honourable, more pleasant, or more gainful, nor ever was war more sure of victory, nor more necessary to a settlement; for they had neither houses nor lands of their own, till they had won them by the sword, no, not Joshua himself, yet all the business of the war shall stand still, while they make a long march to the place appointed, and there attend this solemnity. God appointed them to do this when they were got over Jordan, and they did it as soon as possibly they could, tho' they might have had a colourable pretence to have put it off. Note, We must not think to defer our covenanting with God till we are settled in the world, nor must any business put us by from minding and pursuing the one thing needful. The way to prosper, is to *begin with God*, Matth. vi. 33. (2.) It is an instance of the care of God concerning his faithful servants and worshippers. Tho' they were in an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe, as Jacob, when in this very country he was going to Beth-el to pay his vows, *the terror of God was upon the cities round about*, Gen. xxxv. 5. Note, When we are in the way of duty, God takes us under special protection.

Twice Moses had given express orders for this solemnity; once *Deut. xi. 29, 30.* where he seems to have pointed to the very place where it was to be performed; and again *Deut. xxvii. 2, &c.* It was a federal transaction: the covenant was now renewed between God and Israel upon their taking possession of the land of promise, that they might be encouraged in the conquest of it, and might know upon what terms they held it, and come under fresh obligations to obedience. In token of the covenant,

1. They built an altar, and offered sacrifice to God, *ver. 30, 31.* in token of their dedication of themselves to God, as living sacrifices to his honour, in and by a mediator, who is the altar that sanctifies this gift. This altar was erected on mount Ebal, the mount on which the curse was put, *Deut. xi. 29.* to signify that there, where by the law we had reason to expect a curse, by Christ's sacrifice of himself for us, and his mediation, we have peace with God; he has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a *curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. Even there where it was said by the curse ye are not my people, there it is said, through Christ the altar, ye are the *children of the living God*, Hos. i. 10. The curses pronounced on mount Ebal would immediately have been executed, if atonement had not been made by sacrifice.

By the sacrifices offered on this altar they did likewise give God the glory of the victories they had already obtained, as *Exod. xvii. 15.* now they had had the comfort of them in the spoils of Ai, it was fit God should have the praise of them; and they also implored his favour for their future success; for supplications as well as thanksgivings were intended in their peace-offerings. The way to prosper in all that we put our hand unto, is to take God along with us, and in all our ways to acknowledge him by prayer, praise, and dependence.

This altar they built was of rough, unhewn stone, according to the law, *Exod. xx. 25.* for that which is most plain and natural, and least artful and affected in the worship of God, he is best pleased with. Man's device can add no beauty to God's institutions.

2. They received the law from God; and this they must do that would find favour with him, and expect to have their offerings accepted; for if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayers will be an abomination. When God took Israel into covenant he gave them his law, and they, in token of their consent to the covenant, subjected themselves to the law. Now here,

1. The law of the ten commandments was written upon stones in the presence of all Israel, as an abridgment of the whole, *ver. 32.* This copy was not graven in the stone, as that which was reserved in the ark, that was to be done only by the finger of God, it is his prerogative to write the law in the heart, but the stones were plaistered, and it was written upon the plaister, *Deut. xxvii. 4, 8.* It was written that all might see what it was that they consented to, and that it might be a standing remaining testimony to posterity, of God's goodness in giving them such good laws, and a testimony against them, if they were disobedient to them. It is a great mercy to any people to have the law of God in writing, and it is fit that the written law should be exposed to common view in a known tongue, that it may be seen and read of all men.

2. The blessings and the curses, the sanctions of the law, were publicly read, and the people (we may suppose) according to Moses's appointment said Amen to them, *ver. 33, 34.* The auditory was very large; (1.) The greatest prince was not excused, the elders, officers, and judges, are not above the cognizance of the law, but will come under the blessing or the curse, according as they are or are not obedient to it, and therefore they must be present to consent to the covenant, and to go before the people therein. (2.) The poorest stranger was not excluded; here was a general naturalization of them, as well the stranger as he that was born among them was taken into covenant; this was an encouragement to proselytes, and a happy preface of the kindnesses intended for the poor Gentiles, in the latter days.

The tribes were posted, as Moses directed, six towards Gerizzim, and six towards Ebal. And the ark in the midst of the valley was between them, for it was the *ark of the covenant*; and, in it was shut up the close rolls of that law, which was copied out, and made patent upon the stones: The covenant was commanded, and the command covenanted. The priests that attended the ark, or some of the Levites that attended them, after the people had all taken their places, and silence was proclaimed, pronounced distinctly the blessings and the curses, as Moses had drawn them up, to which the tribes said Amen; and yet it is here only said, that they should *bless the people*, for the blessing was that which was first and chiefly intended, and which God designed in giving the law. If they fell under the curse, that was their own fault. And it was really a blessing to the people that they had this matter laid so plainly before them, *Life and death, good and evil*; he had not dealt so with other nations.

3. The law itself, the precepts and prohibitions were also read, (*ver. 35.*) it should seem by Joshua himself, who did not think it below him to be a reader in the congregation of the Lord; in conformity to this example, the solemn reading of the law, which was appointed *once in seven years* (*Deut. xxxi. 11.*) was performed by their king, or chief magistrate. It is here intimated what a general publication of the law this was, (1.) Every word was read; even the minutest precepts were not omitted, nor the most copious abridged; not one iota or tittle of the law shall pass away, and therefore none was in reading skipped over, under pretence of straits of time, or that any part was needless, or not proper to be read. It was not many weeks since Moses had preached the whole book of *Deuteronomy* to them, yet Joshua must now read it all over again; it is good to hear twice what God has spoken once, *Psal. lxii. 11.* and to review what has been delivered to us, or to have it repeated, that we may not let it slip. (2.) Every Israelite was present, even *the women and the little ones*, that all might know and do their duty. Note, Masters of families should bring their wives and children with them, to the solemn assemblies for religious worship. All that are capable of learning, must come to be *taught out of the law*. The strangers also attended with them; for wherever we are, tho' but as strangers, we should improve every opportunity of acquainting our selves with God and his holy will.

CHAP. IX.

Here is in this chapter, 1. *The impolitical confederacy of the kings of Canaan against Israel*, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. *The political confederacy of the inhabitants of Gibeon with Israel.* 1. *How it was jubbly proposed and petitioned for by the Gibeonites, pretending to come from a far country*, *ver. 3—13.* 2. *How it was unwarily consented to by Joshua and the Israelites, to the disgust of the congregation when the fraud was discovered*, *ver. 14—18.* 3. *How the matter was adjusted to the satisfaction of all sides, by giving these Gibeonites their lives, because they had covenanted with them, yet depriving them of their liberties, because the covenant was not fairly ordained*, *ver. 19—27.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite heard thereof: 2. That they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua, and with Israel, with one accord.

Hitherto the Canaanites had acted defensively, the Israelites were the aggressors upon Jericho and Ai, but here the kings of Canaan are in consultation to attack Israel, and concert matters for a vigorous effort of their united forces, to check the progress of their victorious arms. Now (1.) It was strange they did not do this sooner. They had notice long since of their approach; Israel's design upon Canaan was no secret; one would have expected that a prudent concern for their common safety should have put them upon taking some measures to oppose their coming over Jordan, and maintained that pass against them, or to have given them a warm reception as soon as they were over. It was strange they did not attempt to raise the siege of Jericho, or at least fall in with the men of Ai, when they had given them a defeat. But they were either through presumption or despair wonderfully befotted,

defotted, and at their wits end; many know not the things that belong to their peace till they are hid from their eyes. (2.) It was more strange that they did it now: Now the conquest of Jericho had given such a pregnant proof of God's power; and that of Ai of Israel's policy, one would have thought the end of their consultation should have been not to fight with Israel, but to make peace with them, and to gain the best terms they could for themselves. This had been their wisdom, *Luke xiv. 32.* but their minds were blinded, and their hearts hardened to their destruction.

Observe, 1. What induced them now at last to enter upon this consultation. When they *heard thereof*, ver. 1. not only of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but of the convention of the states of mount Ebal, which we have an account of immediately before; when they heard that Joshua, as if he thought himself already compleat master of the country, had had all his people together, and had read the laws to them, by which they must be governed, and taken their promises to submit to those laws, then they perceived the Israelites were in good earnest, and thought it was high time for them to bestir themselves. The pious devotion of God's people sometimes provokes and exasperates their enemies more than any thing else.

2. How unanimous they were in their resolves. Tho' they were many kings, of different nations, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, &c. doubtless of different interests, and that had oft been at variance one with another, yet determined with one mouth, *nemine contradicente*, to unite against Israel. O, that Israel would learn this of Canaanites, to sacrifice private interests to the publick welfare, and to lay aside all animosities among themselves, that they may cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men!

3. ¶ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho, and to Ai, 4. They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been embassadours, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-bottles, old, and rent, and bound up, 5. And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them, and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. 6. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. 7. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us, and how shall we make a league with you? 8. And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? 9. And they said unto him, from a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, 10. And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth. 11. Wherefore our elders, and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us. 12. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses, on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: 13. And these bottles of wine which we filled, were new, and behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old, by reason of the very long journey. 14. And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

Here, 1. The Gibeonites desire to make peace with Israel, being alarmed by the tidings they heard of the destruction of Jericho, ver. 3. Other people heard those tidings, and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel, but the Gibeonites heard them, and were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and the grace of God in the gospel, is to some a *favour of life unto life*; but to others, a *favour of death unto death*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. I do not remember that we read any where of a king of Gibeon: Had their government been at this time in a single person, perhaps his heart would have been too high to yield to Israel, but he would have joined with the rest of the kings against Israel. But these four united cities mentioned, ver. 17. seem to have been governed by elders, or senators, ver. 11. who consulted the common safety more than their own personal dignity. The inhabitants of Gibeon did well for themselves.

2. The method they took to compass it. They knew that all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be cut off, perhaps they had some spies in the congregation at Ebal, when the law

No. xvi.

was read, who observed and brought them notice of the command given to Israel, *Deut. vii. 1, 2, 3.* that they should *show no mercy* to the Canaanites, give them no quarter in battle, which made them afraid of fighting them, and that they should *make no covenant with them*, which made them despair of gaining any advantage by treating with them, and therefore there was no way of saving their lives from the sword of Israel, unless they could by disguising themselves, make Joshua believe that they came from some very far country, which the Israelites were not commanded to make war upon, nor forbidden to *make peace with*, but were particularly appointed to *offer peace to*, *Deut. xx. 10, 15.* Unless they could be admitted under this notion, they saw there was but one way with them; they must submit to the fate of Jericho and Ai. Tho' the neighbouring princes *knew that all the men thereof were mighty*, (chap. x. 2.) and they knew it themselves, yet they durst not contend with Israel, who had an Almighty God on their side. This therefore is the only game they have to play, and they play it very artfully and successfully; never was any such thing more craftily managed.

(1.) They come under the character of ambassadors from a foreign state, which they thought would please the princes of Israel, and make them proud of the honour of being courted by distant countries; we find Hezekiah fond of those that came to him from a far country, *Isa. xxxix. 3.* they had not used to be thus courted.

2. They pretended to have undergone the fatigues of a very long journey, and produced what passed for an ocular demonstration of it. It should seem it was then usual for those that undertook long journeys to take with them as we do now for long voyages, all manner of provision in kind, the country not being furnished as ours is now with the houses of entertainment, for the convenience of which, when we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now, they here pretended that their provision when they brought it from home, was fresh and new, but now it appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered, but made the best of their way; so that from hence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country, their sacks or portmanteau were old, the wine all drank, and the bottles, in which it had been, broken, their shoes and clothes worn worse than the Israelites in forty years, their bread mouldy, ver. 4, 5. and again, ver. 12, 13. Thus God's Israel have often been deceived and imposed upon with a shew of antiquity. But (as bishop Hall expresseth it) *errors are never the elder for their being patched*, and so seeming old, but they that will be caught with this Gibeonitish stratagem, it is a sign they have not consulted with God. And thus there are those who make themselves poor with the badges of want and distress, and yet *have great riches*, Prov. xiii. 7. or at least have no need of relief, by which fraud charity is misplaced, and hindered from those that are real objects of it.

3. When they were suspected, and more strictly examined from whence they came, they industriously declined telling the name of their country, till the agreement was settled; (1.) The men of Israel suspected a fraud, ver. 7. *peradventure you dwell among us*, and then we may not, we must not, make any league with you; this might have discouraged the Gibeonites from urging the matter any further, concluding that if the peace were made, the Israelites would not think themselves obliged to keep it, having thus solemnly protested against it, in case they *dwelt among them*; but knowing that there was no hope at all if they stood it out, they bravely ventured a submission; who knows but the people of Israel may save them alive, tho' thus inveigled into a promise, and if they tell them at last they shall but die. (2.) Joshua put the question to them, *Who are ye? and from whence come ye?* He finds himself concerned to stand upon his guard against secret fraud, as well as against open force; we in our spiritual warfare must *stand against the wiles of the devil*, remembering he is a subtle serpent, as well as a roaring lion. In all leagues of relation and friendship we must first try, and then trust, lest we repent at leisure agreements made in haste. (3.) They would not tell whence they came; but are still in the same song, *we are come from a very far country*, ver. 9. they will have it thought, that it is a country Israel knows nothing of, nor ever heard of, and therefore would be never the wiser if they should tell him the name of it.

4. They profess a respect for the God of Israel, the more to ingratiate themselves with Joshua, and we charitably believe they were sincere in this profession, *we be come because of the name of the Lord thy God*, ver. 9. because of what we have heard of that name, which has convinced us that it is *above every name*, and because we have a desire towards that name, and the remembrance of it, and would gladly come under its protection.

5. They fetch their inducements, from what had been done some time before in Moses's reign, the tidings whereof might easily be supposed ere this to have reached distant regions, the plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of Sihon and Og, ver. 9, 10. but prudently say nothing of the destruction of Jericho and Ai, (tho' that was the true inducement, ver. 3.) because they will have it supposed that they came from home long before their conquests were made. We need not be long to seek for reasons why we should submit to the God of Israel, we may be furnished either with new or old, which we will.

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6. They make a general submission, *We are your servants*, and humbly sue for a general agreement, *make a league with us*, ver. 11. They insist not upon terms, but will be glad of peace upon any terms; nor will the case admit of delays, lest the fraud be discovered; fain they would have the bargain struck up presently; if Joshua will but *make a league* with them, they have all they come for, and they hope their ragged clothes and clouted shoes will be no exception against them; God and Israel reject none for their poverty.

Now, 1. Their falsehood cannot be justified, nor ought it to be drawn into a precedent. We must not do evil that good may come. Had they owned their country but renounced the idolatries of it, resigned the possession of it to Israel, and themselves to the God of Israel, we have reason to think Joshua would have been directed by the oracle of God to spare their lives, and they needed not to have made these pretensions. It is observable, when they had once said, *we are come from a far country*, ver. 6. they found themselves necessitated to say it again, ver. 9. and to say what was utterly false concerning their bread, their bottles, their clothes, ver. 12, 13. for one lie is an inlet to another; and that to a third, and so on. The way of that sin is down hill.

But, 2. Their faith and prudence is to be greatly commended; our Lord commended even the unjust steward, because he had done wisely, and well for himself, *Luke xvi. 18*. In submitting to Israel they submitted to the God of Israel, which implied a renunciation of the god they had served, a resignation to the laws of the true religion. They had heard enough to convince them of the infinite power of the God of Israel, and from thence might infer his other perfections of wisdom and goodness; and how can we do better for our selves than *surrender at discretion* to infinite wisdom, and *cast our selves upon the mercy* of a God of infinite goodness. The submission of these Gibeonites was the more laudable, because it was (1.) Singular, their neighbours took another course, and expecting they should join with them. (2.) Speedy; they did not stay till Israel had besieged their cities, then it had been too late to capitulate, but when they were at some distance they desired conditions of peace. The way to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance. Let us imitate these Gibeonites, and *make our peace* with God in the rags of humiliation, godly sorrow, and mortification, so our iniquity shall not be our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed Joshua, and make a league with him, and the Israel of God, and we shall live.

15. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them. 16. And it came to pass at the end of three days, after they had made a league them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them. 17. And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day: now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. 18. And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: and all the congregation murmured against the princes. 19. But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. 20. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them. 21. And the princes said unto them, let them live, (but let them be hewers of wood, and drawers of water unto all the congregation) as the princes had promised them.

Here is, 1. The treaty soon concluded with the Gibeonites; ver. 14, 15. The thing was not done with much formality, but in short, (1.) They agreed to let them live, and more the Gibeonites did not ask. In a common war this had been but a small matter to be granted, but in the wars of Canaan, which were to make a general destruction, it was a great favour to a Canaanite, to have his *life given him for a prey*, Jer. xlv. 5. (2.) This agreement was made not by Joshua only, but by the princes of the congregation, in conjunction with him. Tho' Joshua had an extraordinary call to the government, and extraordinary qualifications for it, yet he would not act in an affair of this nature, without the counsel and concurrence of the princes, who were neither kept in the dark nor kept under foot, but were treated by him as sharers in the government. (3.) It was ratified by an oath, they sware unto them, not by any of the gods of Canaan, but by the God of Israel only, ver. 19. They that mean honestly do not startle at assurances, but satisfy those with whom they treat, and glorify God by calling him to witness to the sincerity of their intentions. (4.) Nothing appears to have been culpable in all this, but that it was done rashly; they took of their victuals, by which they satisfied themselves that it was indeed old and dry, but did not consider that that was no proof of their bringing it fresh from home; so that making use of their senses only, but not their reason, they received the men

(as the margin reads it) because of their victuals, perceiving perhaps upon the view and taste of their bread, not only that now it was old, but that it had been fine and very good at first, whence they inferred that they were persons of some quality, and therefore the friendship of their country was not to be despised. But *they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*. They had the Urim and Thummim with them, which they might have advised with in this difficult case, and that would have told them no lie, would have led them into no error, but they relied so much on their own politicks, that they thought it needless to bring the matter to the oracle. Joshua himself was not altogether without blame herein. Note, We then make more haste than good speed in any business, when we stay not to take God along with us, and by the word and prayer to consult him. Many a time we see cause to reflect upon it with regret, that such and such an affair miscarried, because we *asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*; would we acknowledge him in all our ways, we should find them more safe, easy, and successful.

2. The fraud soon discovered by which this league was procured. *A lying tongue is but for a moment*, and truth will be the daughter of time. Within three days they found, to their great surprize, that the cities which these ambassadors had treated for, were very near them, but one night's foot march from the camp at Gilgal, chap. x. 9. Either their own scouts, or the parties that sallied out to acquaint themselves with the country, or perhaps some deserters that came over to them from the enemy, informed them of the truth in this matter. They that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan, will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.

3. The disgust of the congregation at this. They did indeed submit to the restraints which this league laid upon them, and smote not the cities of the Gibeonites, neither slew the persons, nor seized the prey, but it vexed them to have their hands thus tied, and they *murmured against the princes*, (ver. 18.) it is to be feared more from a jealousy for their own profit, than from a zeal for the fulfilling of God's command, tho' some of them perhaps had a regard to that. Many are forward to arraign and censure the actions of princes while they are ignorant of the springs of those actions, and are incompetent judges of the reasons of state that govern them. While therefore we are satisfied in general that those who are over us, aim at nothing but the publick good, and sincerely seek the welfare of our people, we ought to make the best of what they do, and not exercise our selves in things above us.

4. The prudent endeavour of the princes to pacify the discontented congregation, and to accommodate the matter; herein all the princes concurred and were unanimous, which doubtless disposed the people to acquiesce.

1. They resolved to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, for so they had expressly sworn to do, ver. 15. to let them live.

(1.) The oath was lawful, else it had not bound them, no more than Herod's oath bound him to cut off John Baptist's head; it is true God had appointed them to destroy all the Canaanites, but that law must be construed *in favorem vitæ*, to mean those only that stood it out, and would not surrender their country to them, and not to bind them so far to put off the sense of honour and humanity, as to slay those who had never lift up a hand against them, nor ever would, but before they were reduced to any extremity, or ever attempted any act of hostility, with one consent humbled themselves; the *kings of Israel were certainly more merciful kings than to do so*, 1 Kings xx. 31. and the God of Israel a more merciful God than to order it so, *satis est prostrasse leoni*. And besides, the reason of the law is the law; the mischief designed to be prevented by that law, was the infecting of the Israelites with their idolatry; *Deut. vii. 4*. But if the Gibeonites renounce their idolatry, and become friends and servants to the house of God, the danger is effectually prevented, the reason of the law ceaseth, and consequently the obligation of it, especially to a thing of this nature. The conversion of sinners shall prevent their ruin.

(2.) The oath being lawful, both the princes and the people for whom they transacted were bound by it, bound in conscience, bound in honour, in honour to the God of Israel, by whom they had sworn, and whose name would have been blasphemed by the Canaanites, if they had violated this oath. They speak as those that *feared an oath*, (Eccl. ix. 2.) when they argued thus, *we will let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware*, ver. 20. He that ratifies a promise with an oath, imprecates the divine vengeance if he wilfully break his promise, and has reason to expect that divine justice will take him at his word: God is not mocked, and therefore oaths are not to be jested with. The princes will keep their word, 1. Tho' they lost by it. *A citizen of Sion swears to his own hurt and changeth not*, Psal. xv. 4. Joshua and the princes, when they found it was to their prejudice that they had thus bound themselves, did not apply themselves to Eleazar for a dispensation, much less did they pretend that no faith is to be kept with hereticks, with Canaanites, no, they were strangers to the modern artifices of the Romish church, to elude the most sacred bonds, and even to sanctify perjuries. 2. Tho' the people were uneasy at it, and their discontent might have ended in a mutiny, yet the princes would not violate their engagement to the Gibeonites, we must never be over-awed either by majesty or multitude

titude to do an ill thing, and go against our consciences. 3. Tho' they were drawn into this league by a wile, and might have had a very plausible pretence to declare it null and void, yet they adhered to it. They might have pleaded, tho' those were the men with whom they exchanged the ratifications, yet these were not the cities intended in the league; they had promised to spare certain cities without names that were very far off, and upon the express consideration of their being so, but these were very near, and therefore not the cities that they covenanted with. And many learned men have thought, they were so grossly imposed upon by the Gibeonites, that it had been lawful for them to have recalled their promise, but that to preserve their reputation, and to keep up in Israel a veneration for an oath, they would stand to it; but it is plain they thought themselves indispensably obliged by it, and were apprehensive that the wrath of God would fall upon them if they broke it. And however their adherence to it might be displeasing to the congregation, it is plain it was acceptable to God, for when, in pursuance of this league, they undertook the protection of the Gibeonites, God gave them the most glorious victory that ever they had in all their wars, chap. x. and long after severely avenged the wrong Saul did to the Gibeonites in violation of this league, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Let this convince us all how religiously we ought to perform our promises, and make good our bargains, and what conscience we ought to make of our words, when they are once given. If a covenant obtained by so many lies and deceits yet might not be broken, shall we think to evade the obligation of those that have been made with all possible honesty and fairness. If others fraud will not justify or excuse one falsehood, certainly others honesty in dealing with us will aggravate and condemn our dishonesty in dealing with them.

2. Tho' they spared their lives yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be *hewers of wood, and drawers of water to the congregation*, ver. 21. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for (1.) They that were angry that the Gibeonites lived, might be content when they saw them condemned to that which in the opinion of sense is worse than death, perpetual servitude. (2.) They that were angry they were not spoiled, might be content when their service of the congregation would be more to their publick advantage, than their best efforts could be; and, in short, the Israelites would be no losers either in honour or profit by this peace with the Gibeonites; convince them of this, and they will be satisfied.

22. ¶ And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? 23. Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the house of my God. 24. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25. And now behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. 26. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. 27. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

The matter is here settled between Joshua and the Gibeonites, and an explanation of the league agreed upon; we may suppose that now, not the messengers that were first sent, but the elders of Gibeon, and of the cities that were dependent upon it, were themselves present and treated with, that the matter might be fully compromised.

1. Joshua reproves them for their fraud, ver. 22. And they excuse it as well as they can, ver. 24. (1.) Joshua gives the reproof very mildly; *wherefore have ye beguiled?* He doth not load them with any ill names, doth not give them any harsh provoking language, doth not call them; as they deserve to be called, base liars, but only asks them, *why have ye beguiled us?* Under the greatest provocations it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper, and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it. (2.) They make the best excuse for themselves, that the thing would bear, ver. 24. They found by the word of God that sentence of death was passed upon them, the command was to *destroy all the inhabitants of the land*, without exception; and they found by the works of God already wrought, that there was no opposing the execution of this sentence; they considered that God's sovereignty is incontestible; his justice inflexible; and his power irresistible; and therefore resolved to try what his mercy was, and found it was not in vain

to cast themselves upon it. They do not go about to justify their lie, but in effect beg pardon for it, pleading it was purely to save their lives that they did it, which every man that finds in himself the force of the law of self-preservation will therefore make great allowances for; especially in such a case as this, where the fear was not merely of the power of man, (if that were all, one might flee from that, to the divine protection,) but of the power of God himself which they saw engaged against them.

2. Joshua condemns them to servitude, as a punishment of their fraud, ver. 23. and they submit to the sentence, ver. 25. and for ought appears both sides are pleased.

1. Joshua pronounceth them perpetual bondmen. They had purchased their lives with a lie, but that being no good consideration, he obligeth them to hold their lives under the rent and reservation of their continual labours, in hewing wood, and drawing water, the meanest and most toilsome employments. Thus their lie was punished; had they dealt fairly and above-board with Israel, perhaps they had had more honourable conditions granted them, but now, since they gain their lives with ragged clothes, and clouted shoes, the badges of servitude, they are condemned for ever to wear such, so must their doom be. And thus the ransom of their lives is paid; dominion is acquired by the preservation of a life that lies at mercy (*Servus dicitur a servando*) they owe their service to them to whom they owe their lives. Observe how the judgment is given against them. (1.) Their servitude is made a curse to them. Now ye are cursed with the ancient curse of Canaan, from whom these Hivites descended, a *servant of servants shalt thou be*, Gen. ix. 25. What shall be done to the false tongue but this? cursed shall it be. (2.) Yet this curse is turned into a blessing, they must be servants, but it shall be for the house of my God. The princes would have them slaves, *unto all the congregation*, ver. 21. at least they chose to express themselves so, for the qualifying of the people that were discontented, but Joshua mitigates the sentence, both in honour to God, and in favour to the Gibeonites, it would be too hard upon them to make them every man's drudge; if they must be *hewers of wood, and drawers of water*, than which there cannot be a greater disparagement, especially to them who were citizens of a royal city, and *all mighty men*, chap. x. 2. yet they shall be so to the house of my God, than which there cannot be a greater preferment; David himself could like to be a door-keeper there. Even servile work becomes honourable when it is done for the house of my God, and the officers thereof. (1.) They were hereby excluded from the liberties and privileges of true-born Israelites, and a remaining mark of distinction put upon their posterity, throughout all their generations. (2.) They were hereby employed in such services as required their personal attendance upon *the altar of God in the place which he should choose*, ver. 27. which would bring them to the knowledge of the law of God, keep them tight to that holy religion to which they were profelyted, and prevent their revolt to the idolatries of their fathers. (3.) This would be a great advantage to the priests and Levites to have so many, and those mighty men, constant attendants upon them, and engaged by office to do all the drudgery of the tabernacle. A great deal of wood must be hewed for fuel for God's house, not only to keep the fire burning continually upon the altar, but to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings, &c. And a great deal of water drawn for the divers washings which the law prescribed; these, and other such servile works, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts; &c. which otherwise the Levites must have done themselves, these Gibeonites were appointed to do. (4.) They were herein servants to the congregation too; for whatever promotes and helps forward the worship of God, is real service to the common-wealth. It is the interest of every Israelite, that the altar of God be well attended. Hereby also the congregation was excused from much of this servile work, which perhaps would otherwise have been expected from some of them. God had made a law that the Israelites should never make any of their brethren bondmen, if they had slaves they must be *of the heathen that were round about them*, Lev. xxv. 44. Now in honour of this law, and of Israel that was honoured by it, God would not have the drudgery, no, not of the tabernacle it self to be done by Israelites, but by Gibeonites, who were afterwards called Nethinim, men given to the Levites, as they were to the priests, (Numb. iii. 9.) to minister to them in the service of God. (5.) This may be looked upon as typifying the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel-church. Now they were taken in upon their submission; to be under-officers, but afterwards God promiseth that he will *take of them for priests and Levites*, Isa. lxvi. 21.

2. They submit to this condition, ver. 25. as conscious of a fault, in framing a lie, whereby to deceive the Israelites, and sensible also how narrowly they escaped with their lives, and what a kindness it was to have them spared, they acquiesce in the proposal, *do as it seemeth right unto thee*. Better live in servitude, especially such servitude, than not live at all. Those of the very meanest, and most despicable condition, are described to be *hewers of wood, and drawers of water*, Deut. xxix. 11. But skin for skin, liberty, and labour, and *all that a man has will he give for his life*, and no ill bargain. Accordingly the matter was determined, (1.) Joshua delivered them out of the hands of the Israelites that they should not be slain, ver. 26. It seems there were those who would have

have fallen upon them with the sword, if Joshua had not interposed with his authority; but wise generals know when to lock up the sword, as well as when to draw it. (2.) He then delivered them again into the hands of the Israelites to be enslaved, *ver. 27*. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we find afterwards, that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin, and one to that of Judah; nor were they themselves to be at their own dispose, but, as bishop Patrick thinks, were dispersed into the cities of the Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve at the altar, out of the profits of which, it is probable, they were maintained. And thus Israel's bondmen became the Lord's freemen, for his service in the meanest office is liberty, and his work is its own wages. And this they got by their early submission. Let us, in like manner, submit to our Lord Jesus, and refer our selves to him, say, *We are in thy hand, do unto us as seemeth good and right unto thee*; only save our souls, and we shall not repent it: if he appoint us to bear his cross, and draw in his yoke, and serve at his altar, that shall be afterwards neither shame nor grief to us, while the meanest office in God's service will entitle us to a dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.

C H A P. X.

We have in this chapter an account of the conquest of the kings and kingdoms of the southern part of the land of Canaan, as in the next chapter of the reduction of the northern parts, which together completed the glorious successes of the wars of Canaan. In this chapter, we have account, 1. Of the routing of their forces in the field. In which observe, (1.) Their confederacy against the Gibeonites, ver. 1—5. (2.) The Gibeonites request to Joshua to assist them, ver. 6. (3.) Joshua's speedy march under divine encouragement for their relief, ver. 7—9. (4.) The defeat of the armies of these confederate kings, ver. 10, 11. (5.) The miraculous prolonging of the day, by the standing still of the sun, in favour of the conquerors, ver. 12—14. 2. Of the execution of the kings that escaped out of the battle, ver. 15—27. 3. Of the taking of the particular cities, and the total destruction of all that were found in them. Makkedah, ver. 28. Libnah, ver. 29, 30. Lachish, ver. 31, 32. and the king of Gezer that attempted its rescue, ver. 33. Eglon, ver. 34, 35. Hebron, ver. 36, 37. Debir, ver. 38, 39. And the bringing of all that country into the hands of Israel, ver. 40—42. And lastly, the return of the army to their head quarters.

1. **N**OW it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, (as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king) and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; 2. That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty. 3. Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4. Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel. 5. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. 6. ¶ And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua, to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants: come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains, are gathered together against us.

Joshua and the hosts of Israel had now been a good while in the land of Canaan, and no great matters were effected; they were made masters of Jericho by miracle, of Ai by stratagem, and of Gibeon by surrender, and that was all; hitherto the progress of their victories hath not seemed proportionable to the magnificence of their entry, and the glory of their beginnings. Those among them that were impatient of delays, it is probable, complained of Joshua's slowness, and asked why they did not immediately penetrate into the heart of the country, before the enemy could rally their forces to make head against them; why they stood trifling, while they were so confident both of their title, and of their success: Thus Joshua's prudence, perhaps, was censured as slothfulness, cowardise, and want of spirit. But, 1. Canaan was not to be conquered in a day, God had said, that *by little and little he would drive out the Canaanites*, Exod. xxiii. 30. He that believeth will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed, because it is not performed so soon as we expected.

2. Joshua waited for the Canaanites to be the aggressors; let them first make an onset upon Israel, on the allies of Israel, and then their destruction will be, or at least will appear to be, the more just, and the more justifiable. Joshua had warrant sufficient to set upon them, yet he stays till they strike the first stroke, that he might provide for honest things, not only in the sight of God, but of men; and they would be the more inexcusable in their resistance, now they had seen what favour the Gibeonites found with Israel. 3. It was for the advantage of Israel to sit still a while, that the forces of these little kings might unite in one body, and so might the easier be cut off at one blow. This God had in his eye, when he put it into their hearts to combine against Israel, tho' they designed thereby to strengthen one another, that which he intended was to gather them as sheaves into the floor, to fall together under the flail, Mic. iv. 12. Thus oftentimes that seeming paradox proves wholesome counsel, *stay a while, and we shall have done the sooner*.

After Israel had waited a while, for an occasion to make war upon the Canaanites, a fair one offers itself.

1. Five kings combine against the Gibeonites, Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem, was the first mover, and ring-leader of this confederacy. He had a good name, it signifies lord of righteousness, a descendent perhaps from Melchizedek, king of righteousness; but notwithstanding the goodness of his name and family, it seems he was an ill man, and an implacable enemy to the posterity of that Abraham, whom his predecessor, Melchizedek, was such a faithful friend to. He called upon his neighbours to join against Israel, either because he was the most honourable prince, and had the precedency among these kings, perhaps they had some dependence upon him, at least they paid a deference to him, as the most publick, powerful, and active man they had among them: He, it seems, was first, or most, apprehensive of the danger his country was in, not only by the conquest of Jericho, and Ai, but the surrender of Gibeon, which it seems was the chief thing that alarmed him, it being one of the most considerable frontier towns they had. Against Gibeon therefore all the force he could raise must be levelled, *come, faith he, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon*. This he resolves to do, either, (1.) In policy, that he might retake the city, because it was a strong city, and of mighty consequence to his country, in whose hands it was. Or, (2.) In passion, that he might chastise the citizens for making peace with Joshua, pretending that they had perfidiously betrayed their country, and strengthened the common enemy, whereas they had really done the greatest kindness imaginable to their country, by setting them a good example, if they would have followed it. Thus Satan and his instruments make war upon those that make peace with God; *marvel not if the world hate you*, and treat those as deserters who are converts to Christ.

2. The Gibeonites send notice to Joshua of the distress and danger they were in, *ver. 6*. Now they expect benefit by the league they had made with Israel, because tho' it was obtained by deceit, it was afterwards confirmed when the truth came out. They think Joshua obliged to help them, (1.) In conscience, because they were his servants, not in compliment, as they had said in their first address, *chap. ix. 8. We are thy servants*, but in reality made servants to the congregation, and it is the duty of masters to take care of the poorest and meanest of their servants, and not to see them wronged, when it is in the power of their hand to right them. They that pay allegiance, may reasonably expect protection. Thus David pleads with God, *Psal. cxix. 94. I am thine, save me*, and so may we, if indeed we be his. (2.) In honour, because the ground of their enemies quarrel with them, was the respect they had shewed to Israel, and the confidence they had in a covenant with them. Joshua cannot refuse to help them, when it is for their affection to him, and to the name of his God that they are attacked. David thinks it a good plea with God, *Psal. lxxix. 7. For thy sake I have born reproach*. When our spiritual enemies set themselves in array against us, and threaten to swallow us up, let us, by faith and prayer, apply ourselves to Christ, our Joshua for strength and succour, as St Paul did, and we shall receive the same answer of peace, *my grace is sufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

7. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. 8. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, fear them not: for I have delivered them in thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee. 9. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. 10. And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. 11. And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hail-stones, than they whom the children

of Israel slew with the sword. 12. ¶ Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon. 13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? so the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. 14. And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

Here, 1. Joshua resolves to assist the Gibeonites, and God encourageth him in that resolve. (1.) He ascended from Gilgal, ver. 7. i. e. he designed, determined, and prepared for this expedition to relieve Gibeon, for it is probable it was before he stirred a step that God spake to him to encourage him. It was generous, and just in Joshua to help his new allies, tho' perhaps the king of Jerusalem, when he attacked them, little thought that Joshua would have been so ready to help them, but expected he would abandon them as Canaanites, the rather, because they had obtained their league with him by fraud, therefore he speaks, with assurance, ver. 4. of smiting Gibeon. But Joshua knew that his promise to let them live, obliged him, not only not to slay them himself, but not to stand by and see them slain, when it was in the power of his hand to prevent it, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. He knew that when they embraced the faith and worship of the God of Israel, they came to trust under the shadow of his wings, (Ruth ii. 12.) and therefore, as his servant, he was bound to protect them. (2.) God animated him for this undertaking, ver. 8. *Fear not, I. e. 1. Doubt not of the goodness of thy cause, and the clearness of thy call; tho' it be to assist Gibeonites, thou art in the way of duty, and God is with thee of a truth. 2. Dread not the power of the enemy; tho' so many kings are confederate against thee, and are resolved to make their utmost efforts for the reduction of Gibeon, and it may be will fight desperately in a desperate cause; yet let not that discourage thee, I have delivered them into thine hand, and those can make neither resistance, nor escape, whom God has marked for destruction.*

2. Joshua applies himself to execute this resolve, and God assists him in the execution. Here we have,

1. The great industry of Joshua, and the power of God working with that for the defeat of the enemy. In this action,

(1.) Joshua shewed his good-will, in the haste he made for the relief of Gibeon, ver. 9. *He came unto them suddenly*, for the extremity was such as would not admit delay. If one of the tribes of Israel had been in danger, he could not have shewed more care or zeal for its relief, than here for Gibeon, remembring in this, as in other cases, there must be one law for the stranger that was profecuted, and for him that was born in the land. Scarce had the confederate princes got their forces together, and set down before Gibeon, but Joshua was upon them, the surprize of which would put them into the greatest confusion. Now the enemy were actually drawn up into a body, which had all as it were but one neck, dispatch was now as serviceable to his cause, as before delay was, while he waited for this general rendezvous; and now things were ripe for execution, no man more expeditious than Joshua, who before had seemed slow: *Now it shall never be said he left that to be done to-morrow, which he could do to day.* When Joshua found he could not reach Gibeon in a day, lest he should lose any real advantages against the enemy, or so much as seem to come short, or to neglect his new allies, he marched all night, resolving not to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had accomplished this enterprize. It was well the forces he took with him were mighty men of valour, not only able bodied men, but men of spirit and resolution, and hearty in the cause, else they neither could, nor would, have born this fatigue, but would have murmured at their leader, and would have asked, is this the rest we were promised in Canaan? But they well considered that the present toil was in order to a happy settlement, and therefore were reconciled to it. Let the good soldiers of Jesus Christ learn from hence to endure hardness, in following the lamb whither soever he goes, and not think themselves undone, if their religion lose them now and then a night's sleep, it will be enough to rest when we come to heaven.

But what needed Joshua to put himself and his men so much to the stretch? Had not God promised him, that without fail he would deliver the enemies into his hand? It is true he had, but God's promises are intended, not to slacken and supersede, but to quicken and encourage our endeavours. *He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate providence, but doth make haste to attend it, with a diligent, not a distrustful, speed.*

(2.) God shewed his great power, in defeating the enemies which Joshua so vigorously attacked, ver. 10, 11. Joshua had a very numerous and powerful army with him, hands enough to dispatch a dispirited enemy, so that the enemy might have been scattered by the ordinary fate of war, but God himself would appear in this great and decisive battle, and draw up the artillery of heaven against the Canaanites, to demonstrate to his people, that

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they got not this land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but God's right hand and his arm, Psal. xlv. 3. *The Lord discomfited them before Israel*, Israel did what they could, and yet God did all. (1.) It needs must be a very great terror and confusion to the enemy, to perceive that heaven itself fought against them, for who can contest with, flee from, or fence, against the powers of heaven? They had affronted the true God, and robbed him of his honour; by worshipping the host of heaven, giving that worship to the creature which is due to the Creator only, and now the host of heaven fights against them, and even that part of the creation which they had idolized is at war with them, and even triumphs in their ruin, Jer. viii. 2. There is no way of making any creature propitious to us; no not by sacrifice or offering, but only by making our peace with God, and keeping ourselves in his love. This had been enough to make them an easy prey to the victorious Israelites, yet this was not all. (2.) Besides the terror struck upon them, there was a great slaughter made of them by hail-stones, which were so large, and came down with such a force, that more were killed by the hail-stones than by the sword of the Israelites, tho', no doubt, they were busy: God himself speaks to Job of treasures, or magazines of snow and hail, which he has reserved for the day of battle and war, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. and here they are made use of to destroy the Canaanites. Here was hail shot from God's great ordinance, that, against whomsoever it was directed, was sure to hit, and never glanced upon the Israelites, mixed with them, and whenever it hit was sure to kill. See here how miserable they are that have God their enemy, and how sure to perish, *it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands*, for there is no fleeing out of them. Some observe, that Beth-horon lay north of Gibeon, Azekah and Makkedah lay south, so that they fled each way, but which way soever they fled the hail-stones pursued them, and met them at every turn.

2. The great faith of Joshua, and the power of God crowning that with the miraculous arrest of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be prolonged, and so the enemy totally defeated. The hail-stones had their rise no higher than the clouds, but to shew that Israel's help came from above the clouds, the sun itself, who by his constant motion serves the whole earth, by halting when there was occasion served the Israelites, and did them a kindness; *the sun and moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of thine arrows* which gave the signal, Hab. iii. 11.

1. Here is the prayer of Joshua that the sun might stand still. I call it his prayer, because it is said, ver. 12. *he spake to the Lord*: as Elijah, tho' we read, 1 Kings xvii. 1. only of his prophecy of the drought, yet is said, Jam. v. 17. to pray for it. Observe, 1. An instance of Joshua's unwearied activity in the service of God and Israel, that though he had marched all night, and fought all day, and one would expect should have a mind to repose himself, and get a little sleep, and give his army some time to rest, that, like the hireling, he should earnestly have desired the shadow, and bid the night welcome, when he had done such a good day's work, yet instead of that he wishes for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, Those that wait on the Lord, and work for him, shall renew their strength, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint, Isa. xl. 31. 2. An instance of his great faith in the almighty power of God, as above the power of nature, and able to control, and alter the usual course of it. No doubt, Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression upon his spirit, which he knew to be of divine original, prompting him to desire that this miracle might be wrought upon this occasion, else it had been presumption in him to desire or expect it; the prayer had not been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace, God wrought this faith in him, and then said, *according to thy faith*, and thy prayer of faith, *be it unto thee*. It cannot be imagined however such a thing as this should enter into his mind, if God had not put it there, a man would have had a thousand projects in his head for the compleating of the victory, before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old Testament saints the Spirit made intercession according the will of God; what God will give, he inclines the hearts of his praying people to ask, and for what he will do he will be enquired of, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

Now, (1.) It looked great for Joshua to say, *Sun, stand thou still*. His ancestor Joseph had indeed dreamed that the sun and moon did obeisance to him, but who would have thought that after it had been fulfilled in the figure, it should be again fulfilled in the letter to one of his posterity. The prayer is thus expressed with authority, because it was not an ordinary prayer, such as is directed and supported only by God's common providence or promise, but the prayer of a prophet at this time divinely inspired for this purpose, and yet it intimates to us the prevalency of prayer in general, so far as it is regulated by the word of God, and may mind us of that honour put upon prayer, Isa. xlv. 11. *Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me*. He bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon, the place of action, and seat of the war, intimating, that what he designed in this request was the advantage of Israel against their enemies; it is probable the sun was now declining, and that he called for the lengthning out of the day, not till he observed its hastening towards its period. He doth likewise, in the name of the King of kings, arrest the moon, perhaps because

because it was requisite for the preserving of the harmony and good order of the spheres, that the course of the rest of the heavenly bodies should be stayed likewise, otherwise while the sun shone he needed not the moon; and here he mentions the valley of Ajalon, which was near to Gibeon, because there he was at that time.

(2.) It was bold indeed to say so before Israel, and argues a very strong assurance of faith. If the event had not answered the demand, nothing could have been a greater slur upon him; the Israelites would have concluded he was certainly going mad, or he had never talked so extravagantly. But he knew very well that God would own and answer a petition which he himself directed to be drawn up and presented, and therefore was not afraid to say before all Israel, calling them to observe this work of wonder, *Sun, stand thou still*, for he was sure whom he had trusted. He believed the almighty power of God, else he could not have expected that the sun going on in its strength, driving in a full career, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, should be stopped in an instant. He believed the sovereignty of God in the kingdom of nature, else he could not have expected that the established law, and course of nature, should be changed and interrupted, the ordinances of heaven, and the constant usage according to these ordinances broken in upon. And he believed God's particular favour to Israel above all people under the sun, else he could not have expected, that, to favour them upon an emergency with a double day, he should (which must follow of course) amuse and terrify so great a part of the terrestrial globe with a double night at the same time; it is true he *causeth the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust*, but for this once the unjust shall wait for it beyond the usual time, while in favour to righteous Israel it stands still.

2. The wonderful answer to this prayer. No sooner said but done, *ver. 13. The sun stood still, and the moon stayed*. Notwithstanding the vast distance between the earth and the sun, at the word of Joshua the sun stopped immediately, for the same God that rules in heaven above, rules at the same time on this earth, and when he pleases, even *the heavens shall hear the earth*, as here. Concerning this great miracle, it is here said, (1.) That it continued a whole day, *i. e.* the sun continued as long again above the horizon, as otherwise it would have done. It is commonly supposed to have been about the middle of summer that this happened, when in that country it was about fourteen hours between sun and sun, so that this day was about twenty eight hours long; yet if we suppose it to have been at that time of the year when the days are at the shortest, it will be the more probable that Joshua should desire and pray for the prolonging of the day. (2.) That hereby the people had full time to *avenge themselves of their enemies*, and to give them a total defeat. We oft read in history of battles which the night put an end to, the shadows of which favoured the retreat of the conquered; to prevent this advantage to the enemy in their flight the day was doubled, that the hand of Israel might *find out all their enemies*; but the eye and hand of God can find them out without the help of the sun's light, for to him *the night shineth as the day*, Psal. cxxxix. 12. Note, Sometimes God compleats a great salvation in a little time, and makes but one day's work of it. Perhaps this miracle is alluded to *Zech. xiv. 6, 7.* where the day of God's *fighting against the nations*, is said to be *one day*, and that *at evening time it shall be light*, as here. And, (3.) That there was *never any day like it*, before or since, in which God put such an honour upon faith, and prayer, and Israel's cause; never did he so wonderfully comply with the request of a man, nor so wonderfully fight for his people. (4.) This is said to be written in the book of Jasher, a collection of state-poems, in which the poem made upon this occasion was preserved among the rest; probably, the same with that *book of the wars of the Lord*, Numb. xxi. 14. which afterwards was continued and carried on by one Jasher. Those words, *sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon*, sounding metrical, are supposed to be taken from the narrative of this event, as it was found in the book of Jasher. Not that the divine testimony of the book of Joshua needed confirmation from the book of Jasher, a human composition: but to those who had that book in their hands, it would be of use to compare this history with it; which warrants the appeals the learned make to prophane history for the corroborating of the proofs of the truth of sacred history.

But surely this stupendous miracle of the standing still of the sun, was intended for something more than merely to give Israel so much the more time to find out and kill their enemies, which without this might have been done the next day. (1.) God would hereby *magnify Joshua*, chap. iii. 7. as a particular favourite, and one whom he did delight to honour; being a type of him who hath all power, both in heaven and in earth, and whom the winds and the seas obey. (2.) He would hereby notify to all the world what he was doing for his people Israel here in Canaan; the sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon, and the valley of Ajalon, as it were to contemplate the great works of God there for Israel, and so to engage the children of men to look that way, and to *enquire of this wonder done in the land*, (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) Proclamation was hereby made to all the neighbour nations, *Come, behold the works of the Lord*, Psal. xlv. 8. and say, *What nation is there so great as Israel is, who has God so nigh unto them?* One would have thought this would

bring such real ambassadors as the Gibeonites pretended to be from a very far country, to court the friendship of Israel because of the name of the Lord their God. (3.) He would hereby convince and confound those idolaters that worshipped the sun and moon, and gave divine honours to them; by demonstrating that they were subject to the command of the God of Israel, and that as high as they were he was above them; and thus he would fortify his people against temptations to this idolatry; which he foresaw they would be addicted to, (*Deut. iv. 19.*) and which notwithstanding this they afterwards corrupted themselves with. (4.) This miracle signified (it is the learned bishop Pierson's notion) that in the latter days, when the *light of the world* was tending towards a *night of darkness*, the *sun of righteousness*, even our Joshua should arise, (*Mal. iv. 2.*) give check to the approaching night, and be the true light. To which let me add, that when Christ conquered our spiritual enemies upon the cross, the miracle wrought on the sun was the reverse of this, it was then darkened as if it were gone down at noon, for Christ needed not the light of the sun to carry on his victories, he then made darkness his pavilion: and, lastly, the arresting of the sun and moon in the day of battle, figured the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood in the last great and terrible day of the Lord.

15. ¶ And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him; unto the camp to Gilgal. 16. But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. 17. And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah. 18. And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them. 19. And stay you not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them, suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand. 20. And it came to pass when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter till they were consumed, that the rest *which* remained of them, entered into fenced cities. 21. And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. 22. Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. 23. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24. And it came to pass when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war, which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. 25. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. 26. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. 27. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, *that* Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the caves mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

It was a brave appearance, no doubt, which the five kings made when they took the field, for the reducing of Gibeon, and a brave army they had following them; but they were all routed, put into disorder first, and then brought to destruction by the hail-stones. And now Joshua thought his work was done, he might go with his army into quarters of refreshment: accordingly it was resolved, perhaps in a council of war, that they should presently return to the camp at Gilgal, *ver. 15.* till they should receive orders from God to take possession of the country they had now conquered; but he soon finds he has more work cut out for him, the victory must be pursued, that the spoils might be divided. Accordingly he applies himself to it with renewed vigour.

1. The forces that had dispersed themselves must be followed and smitten. When tidings were brought Joshua where the kings were, he ordered a guard to be set upon them for the present, *ver. 18. reserving them* for another day of destruction, and to be brought forth to a day of wrath, Job xxi. 30. And orders his men to pursue the common soldiers as much as might be to prevent their escaping to the garrisons, which would strengthen them, and make the reduction of them the more difficult, *ver. 19.* Like a prudent general he doth that first which is most needful, and defers his triumphs till he has compleated his conquests; nor was he in such haste to insult over the captured kings, but that he would first prevent the rallying again of their scattered forces. The success of this vigorous pursuit was, (1.) That a very great

great slaughter was made of the enemies of God and Israel. And, (2.) The field was cleared of them, so that none remained but such as got into fenced cities, where they would not long be safe themselves, nor were they capable of doing any service to the cities that sheltered them, unless they could have left their fears behind them. (3.) *None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel*, ver. 21. This expression intimates, 1. Their perfect safety and tranquillity; some think, it should be read, from *Exod. xi. 7. Against any of the children of Israel did not a dog move his tongue*; no, not against any one man of them. They were not threatened by any danger at all after their victory, no, not so much as the barking of a dog. Not one single Israelite (for the original makes it so particular) was brought into any distress, either in the battle, or in the pursuit. 2. Their honour and reputation, no man had any reproach to cast upon them, or an ill word to give them, God not only tied the hands but stopped the mouths of their enraged enemies, and put lying lips to silence. 3. The Chaldee paraphrase makes it an expression of their unalloyed joy for this victory, reading it, *there was no hurt or loss to the children of Israel, for which any man should afflict his soul*. When the army came to be reviewed after the battle, there was none slain, none wounded, none missing, not one Israelite had occasion to lament either the loss of a friend, or the loss of a limb. So cheap, so easy, so glorious was this victory.

2. The kings that had hid themselves must now be called to an account, as rebels against the Israel of God, to whom, by the divine promise, and grant, this land did of right belong, and should have been surrendered upon demand.

See here, (1.) How they were secured. The cave which they fled to, and trusted in for a refuge, became their prison, in which they were clapt up, till Joshua sat in judgment on them, ver. 18. It seems they all escaped both the hail-stones and the sword, God so ordering it, not in kindness to them, but that they might be reserved for a more solemn and terrible execution, as for this cause Pharaoh survived the plagues of Egypt, and was made to stand, that God might in him *show his power*, *Exod. ix. 16*. They all fled, and met at the same place, providence directing them; and now they who were lately consulting against Israel, were put upon new counsels to preserve themselves, and agreed to take shelter in the same cave. The information brought to Joshua of this, is an evidence, that there were those of the country who knew the holes and fastnesses of it that were in his interests. And the care Joshua took to keep them there when they were there, as it is an instance of his policy, and a presence of mind, even in the heat of action, so in the success of their project, it shews how they not only deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who think to hide themselves from God. Their refuge of lies will but bind them over to God's judgment.

(2.) How they were triumphed over. Joshua ordered them to be brought forth out of the cave, set before him as at the bar, and their names called over, ver. 22, 23. And when they either were bound and cast upon the ground, unable to help themselves, or threw themselves upon the ground, humbly to beg for their lives; he called for the general officers, and great men, and commanded them to trample upon these kings, and set their feet upon their necks; not in sport, and to make themselves and the company merry, but with the gravity and decorum that became the ministers of the divine justice, who were not herein to gratify any pride or passion of their own, but to give glory to the God of Israel as higher than the highest, who *treads upon princes as mortar*, (*Isa. xli. 25*.) and *is terrible to the kings of the earth*, *Psal lxxvi. 12*. The thing doth indeed look barbarous, thus to insult over men in misery, that were suddenly fallen from the highest pitch of honour into this disgrace, it was hard for crowned heads to be thus trodden upon, not by Joshua himself, that might better have been born, at least not by him only, but by all the captains of the army, certainly it ought not to be drawn into a precedent, for the case was extraordinary, and we have reason to think it was by divine direction and impulse that Joshua did this.

(1.) God would hereby punish the abominable wickedness of these kings, the measure of whose iniquity was now full. And by this publick act of justice done upon these ringleaders of the Canaanites in sin, he would possess his people with the greater dread and detestation of these sins of the nations that God cast out from before them, which they would be tempted to imitate. (2.) He would hereby have the promise by Moses made good, (*Deut. xxxiii. 29*.) *Thou shalt tread upon their high places*, i. e. their great men, which should the rather be speedily fulfilled in the latter, because they are the very last words of Moses that we find upon record. (3.) He would hereby encourage the faith and hope of his people Israel, in reference to the wars that were yet before them. Therefore Joshua saith, ver. 25. *Fear not, nor be dismayed*.

(1.) Fear not these kings, or any of theirs, as if there were any danger of having this affront now put upon them in after-time revenged upon yourselves; a consideration which keeps many from being insolent towards those they have at their mercy, because they know not how soon the uncertain fate of war may turn the same wheel upon themselves; but you need not fear that any should rise up ever to revenge this quarrel.

(2.) Fear not any other kings, who may at any time be in confederacy against you, for you see these brought down, whom

you thought formidable. *Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies*; now they begin to fall, to fall so low that you may set your feet on their necks, you may be confident they shall not prevail, but shall *surely fall before you*, *Ezth. vi. 13*. (4.) He would hereby give a type and figure of Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and believers victories through him. All the enemies of the Redeemer shall be *made his foot stool*, *Psal. cx. 1*. (And, see, *Psal. xviii. 46*.) The *kings of the earth set themselves against him*, *Psal. ii. 2*. but sooner or later we shall see all things put under him, *Heb. ii. 8*. and *principalities and powers made a shew of*, *Col. ii. 15*. And in these triumphs we are more than conquerors, may *tread upon the lion and adder*, *Psal. xci. 13*. may *ride on the high places of the earth*, *Isa. lviii. 14*. and may be confident that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet*, shall do it shortly, and do it effectually, *Rom. xvi. 20*. See *Psal. cxlix. 8, 9*.

(3.) How they were put to death. Perhaps when they had undergone that terrible mortification of being trodden upon by the captains of Israel, they were ready to say, as Agag, *surely the bitterness of death is past*, and that *sufficient unto them was this punishment which was inflicted by many*, but their honours cannot excuse their lives, their forfeited devoted lives, Joshua smote them with the sword, and then hanged up their bodies till evening, when they were taken down, and thrown *into the cave in which they had hid themselves*, ver. xxvi. 27. That which they thought would have been their shelter was made their prison first, and then their grave; so shall we be disappointed in that which we flee to from God, yet to good people the grave is still *a hiding place*, *Job xiv. 13*. If these five kings had humbled themselves in time, and had begged peace instead of waging war, they might have saved their lives, but now the decree was gone forth, and they *found no place for repentance*, or the reversal of the judgment, it was too late to expect it, tho' perhaps *they sought it carefully with tears*.

28. ¶ And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein, he let none remain: and he did unto the king of Makkedah, as he did unto the king of Jericho. 29. Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah. 30. And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel, and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein: he let none remain in it, but did unto the king thereof, as he did unto the king of Jericho. 31. ¶ And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it. 32. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33. ¶ Then Horem king of Gezer, came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining. 34. ¶ And from Lachish, Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him, and they encamped against it, and fought against it. 35. And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish. 36. And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron, and they fought against it. 37. And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein: he left none remaining (according to all that he had done to Eglon) but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein. 38. ¶ And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him to Debir, and fought against it. 39. And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein, he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof, as he had done also unto Libnah, and to her king. 40. ¶ So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. 41. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea, even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. 42. And all these kings, and their land did Joshua take at one time: because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. 43. And Joshua returned

turned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

We have here Joshua's improvement of the late glorious victory he had obtained, and the advantages he had gained by it; and to do this well is a general praise.

1. Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of. (1.) The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field, he went and took possession of, Lachish, *ver.* 31, 32. Eglon, *ver.* 34, 35. and Hebron, *ver.* 36, 37. The other two Jerusalem and Jarmuth were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done, or so well content with what they had got, that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they slipped the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterwards was not done without difficulty, *Judg.* i. 8. 2 *Sam.* v. 6. (2.) Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took; Makkedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings were fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin, *ver.* 28. Libnah, *ver.* 29, 30. and Debir, *ver.* 38, 39. (3.) One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved to meddle to his own hurt; it was Horem king of Gezer, who either in friendship to his neighbours, or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

2. A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands, *ver.* 40, 41, 42. That part of the land of Canaan they first got possession of which lay south of Jerusalem, and afterwards fell most of it to the lot of the tribe of Judah.

Observe in this narrative, (1.) The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which some think is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place, and tho' they all stood it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them and seized them the same day, *ver.* 28. or in two days, *ver.* 32. Now they were struck with fear by the defeat of their armies, and the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will but be busy, and improve our opportunities. (2.) The great severity Joshua used towards those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, or child, put to the sword *all the souls*, *ver.* 28, 30, 32, 35, &c. *utterly destroyed all that breathed*, *ver.* 40. and *left none remaining*. Nothing could justify this military execution, but that herein they did *as the Lord God of Israel commanded*, *ver.* 40. which was sufficient not only to bear them out, and save them from the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby (1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries, and other abominations which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was, which they had given him by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full. (2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his people Israel, in giving so many men *for them*, and *people for their life*, *Isa.* xliii. 4. *when the heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine*. (*Psal.* lxxx. 8.) Divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to spend their lives to the glory of that God, who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest. (3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, that having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath; and shall *have judgment without mercy*. *Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell*, and no reproach at all to God's infinite goodness. (3.) The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves with the land about them, was shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord *fought for Israel*, *ver.* 42. They could not have got the victory, if God had not undertaken the battle; then we conquer when God fights for us; and *if he be for us who can be against us?*

C H A P. XI.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquest of Canaan; the southern parts of it we had an account of the reduction of, in the foregoing chapter; after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing-time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war. 1. *The confederacy of the northern crowns against Israel*, *ver.* 1—5. 2. *The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them*, *ver.* 6. 3. *His victory over them*, *ver.* 7—9. 4. *The taking of the cities*, *ver.* 10—15. 5. *The destruction of the Anakims*, *ver.* 21, 22. 6. *The general conclusion of the story of this war*, *ver.* 16—20, 23.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph. 2. And to the kings that *were* on the north of the mountains, and of the plains, south of Cinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor, on the west; 3. *And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh.* 4. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. 5. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire. 7. So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly, and they fell upon them. 8. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh east-ward, and they smote them, until they left them none remaining. 9. And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him; he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, tho' in respect of miracles, it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them, were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the gospel against Satan's kingdom, was at first forwarded by miracles, but the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistances of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones, or the standing still of the sun.

In this story we have,

1. The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardning their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception, in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel were returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other but that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that *God will be justified when he speaks*, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah was now *couched as a lion gone up from the prey*, if the northern kings rouse him up it is at their peril, *Gen.* xlix. 9.

Now, (1.) Several nations joined in this confederacy, some *in the mountains* and some *in the plains*, *ver.* 2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, &c. *ver.* 3. of different constitutions, and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel, as against a common enemy. Thus are *the children of this world* more *unanimous*, and therein *wiser than the children of light*. The oneness of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one. (2.) The head of this confederacy was *Jabin king of Hazor*, *ver.* 1. as Adoni-zedek was of the former; it is said, *ver.* 10. Hazor had been the *head of all those kingdoms*, which could not have revolted, but there must be some remaining grudge among them, that was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, *Luke* xxiii. 12. (1.) When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its *quota*, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, *as the sand on the sea-shore in multitudes*, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought either horses or chariots into the field. Josephus tells us, that the army of the Canaanites consisted of three hundred thousand foot, ten thousand horse, and twenty thousand chariots. *Many there be that rise up against God's Israel*; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

2. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own chusing, *ver.* 6. *Be not afraid because of them*. Joshua was remarkable for his courage, it was his master-grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us,

us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side, need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; *more are they that are with us, than they that are against us*; they have the hosts of the Lord, that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement, 1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour; *to-morrow about this time*, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, *I will deliver them up slain*. Tho' they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up. 2. He appoints him to *hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots*, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarce good enough for the cart.

This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua, no doubt, he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experiences they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God is to be observed, (1.) In insinuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other, but that they might have got altogether in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And (2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength, and our strength to our trials.

3. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, *ver. 7*. He came upon them suddenly, and surprized them in their quarters. He made this haste (1.) That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they little thought he had been near them. (2.) That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies camp, *to-morrow about this time*. It is fit we should keep time with God.

4. His success, *ver. 8*. He obtained the honour and advantage of a compleat victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the north-west, others towards Mispeh, east-ward, but the parties Joshua sent out, pursued them each way. So *the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel*; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel, to be made proselytes, and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace, *Rom. xv. 16*. and therefore God delivered them into their hands, to be made sacrifices to his justice, for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

5. His obedience to the orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots, *ver. 9*. which was an instance (1.) Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority that must do as he is bidden. (2.) Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in compliance with God's command. (3.) Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which enabled them to despise the chariots and horses which others trusted in, *Psal. xx. 7—xxxiii. 17*. (4.) Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was *cutting off a right hand*.

10. ¶ And Joshua at that time turned back and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms. 11. And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe; and he burnt Hazor with fire. 12. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them did Joshua take; and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. 13. But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only: that did Joshua burn. 14. And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves: but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

We have here the same improvement made of this victory, that was of that in the foregoing chapter.

1. The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, *ver. 10, 11*. The king of Hazor it seems escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he was got back into his own city, and Joshua was gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way; but it proved that that which he thought would have been for his welfare was his trap, in it *he was taken as in an evil net*, there he was slain, and his city for his sake burnt. Yet we find that the remains of it, being not well looked after by Israel, the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, *Judg. iv. 2*. No. xvi,

2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general; that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor; for Israel was to dwell in *great and goodly cities which they builded not*, Deut. vi. 10. and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure. (1.) In the blood of their enemies, they *smote all the souls*, *ver. 11*. *neither left they any to breathe*, *ver. 14*. that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents. (2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle they *took for a prey to themselves*, *ver. 14*. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness, so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies, for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. This is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

15. ¶ As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua: he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses. 16. So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south-country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same: 17. Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon, under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon; all other they took in battle. 20. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses. 21. ¶ And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. 22. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod there remained. 23. So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

1. A short account is here given of what was done in four things. (1.) The obstinacy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange, that tho' it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites went by the worst, yet they stood it out to the last, not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours; *ver. 19*. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves without ragged cloths, and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so much as *desired conditions of peace*. We are told whence this unaccountable infatuation came, *It was of the Lord to harden their hearts*, *ver. 20*. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterwards by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites. To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies whom they might have made their friends. This was it that ruined them, they *came against Israel in battle*, and gave the first blow, and therefore *might have no favour* shewed them. Those know not what they do who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorized instruments of it. *Are we stronger than God?* Observe here, that hardness of heart is the ruin of sinners. Those that are stupid, and secure and heedless of divine warnings, are already marked for destruction: What hope is there of those concerning whom God has said, *Go, make their hearts fat?* (2.) The constancy of the Israelites in prosecuting this war, *ver. 18*. *Joshua made war a long time*, some reckon it five years, others seven, that were spent in subduing this land. So long God would train up Israel to war, and give them repeated instances of his power and goodness in every new victory that he gave them. (3.) The conquest of the Anakims at last, *ver. 21, 22*. Either this was done as they met with them where they were dispersed, as some think, or rather it would seem the Anakims were retired to their fastnesses, and so were hunted out, and cut off at last, after all the rest of their enemies. The mountains of Judah and Israel were the habitations of those mountains of men; but neither their height, nor the strength of their caves, nor the difficulty of the passes to them could secure, no not these mighty men from the sword of Joshua.

turned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

We have here Joshua's improvement of the late glorious victory he had obtained, and the advantages he had gained by it; and to do this well is a general praise.

1. Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of. (1.) The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field, he went and took possession of, Lachish, *ver.* 31, 32. Eglon, *ver.* 34, 35. and Hebron, *ver.* 36, 37. The other two Jerusalem and Jarmuth were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done, or so well content with what they had got, that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they slipped the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterwards was not done without difficulty, *Judg.* i. 8. 2 *Sam.* v. 6. (2.) Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took; Makkedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings were fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin, *ver.* 28. Libnah, *ver.* 29, 30. and Debir, *ver.* 38, 39. (3.) One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved to meddle to his own hurt; it was Horem king of Gezer, who either in friendship to his neighbours, or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

2. A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands, *ver.* 40, 41, 42. That part of the land of Canaan they first got possession of which lay south of Jerusalem, and afterwards fell most of it to the lot of the tribe of Judah.

Observe in this narrative, (1.) The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which some think is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place, and tho' they all stood it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them and seized them the same day, *ver.* 28. or in two days, *ver.* 32. Now they were struck with fear by the defeat of their armies, and the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will but be busy, and improve our opportunities. (2.) The great severity Joshua used towards those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, or child, put to the sword *all the souls*, *ver.* 28, 30, 32, 35, &c. *utterly destroyed all that breathed*, *ver.* 40. and *left none remaining*. Nothing could justify this military execution, but that herein they did *as the Lord God of Israel commanded*, *ver.* 40. which was sufficient not only to bear them out, and save them from the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby (1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries, and other abominations which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was, which they had given him by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full. (2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his people Israel, in giving so many men *for them*, and *people for their life*, *Isa.* xliii. 4. when *the heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine*. (*Psal.* lxxx. 8.) Divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to spend their lives to the glory of that God, who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest. (3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, that having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath; and shall *have judgment without mercy*. *Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell*, and no reproach at all to God's infinite goodness. (3.) The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves with the land about them, was shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord *fought for Israel*, *ver.* 42. They could not have got the victory, if God had not undertaken the battle; then we conquer when God fights for us; and *if he be for us who can be against us?*

CHAP. XI.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquest of Canaan; the southern parts of it we had an account of the reduction of, in the foregoing chapter; after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing-time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war. 1. The confederacy of the northern kings against Israel, ver. 1—5. 2. The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them, ver. 6. 3. His victory over them, ver. 7—9. 4. The taking of the cities, ver. 10—15. 5. The destruction of the Anakims, ver. 21, 22. 6. The general conclusion of the story of this war, ver. 16—20, 23.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph. 2. And to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains, south of Cinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor, on the west; 3. *And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh.* 4. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. 5. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6. ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire. 7. So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly, and they fell upon them. 8. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh east-ward, and they smote them, until they left them none remaining. 9. And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him; he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, tho' in respect of miracles, it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them, were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the gospel against Satan's kingdom, was at first forwarded by miracles, but the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistances of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones, or the standing still of the sun.

In this story we have,

1. The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardning their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception, in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel were returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other but that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that *God will be justified when he speaks*, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah was now *couched as a lion gone up from the prey*, if the northern kings rouse him up it is at their peril, *Gen.* xlix. 9.

Now, (1.) Several nations joined in this confederacy, some *in the mountains* and some *in the plains*, *ver.* 2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, &c. *ver.* 3. of different constitutions, and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel, as against a common enemy. Thus are *the children of this world* more *unanimous*, and therein *wiser than the children of light*. The oneness of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one. (2.) The head of this confederacy was *Jabin king of Hazor*, *ver.* 1. as Adoni-zedek was of the former; it is said, *ver.* 10. Hazor had been the *head of all those kingdoms*, which could not have revolted, but there must be some remaining grudge among them, that was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, *Luke* xxiii. 12. (1.) When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its *quota*, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, *as the sand on the sea-shore in multitudes*, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought either horses or chariots into the field. Josephus tells us, that the army of the Canaanites consisted of three hundred thousand foot, ten thousand horse, and twenty thousand chariots. *Many there be that rise up against God's Israel*; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

2. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own chusing, *ver.* 6. *Be not afraid because of them*. Joshua was remarkable for his courage, it was his master-grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us,

us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side, need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; *more are they that are with us, than they that are against us*; they have the hosts of the Lord, that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement, 1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour; *to-morrow about this time*, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, *I will deliver them up slain*. Tho' they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up. 2. He appoints him to *hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots*, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarce good enough for the cart.

This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua, no doubt, he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experiences they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God is to be observed, (1.) In insinuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other, but that they might have got altogether in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And (2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength, and our strength to our trials.

3. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, *ver. 7*. He came upon them suddenly, and surprized them in their quarters. He made this haste (1.) That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they little thought he had been near them. (2.) That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies camp, *to-morrow about this time*. It is fit we should keep time with God.

4. His success, *ver. 8*. He obtained the honour and advantage of a compleat victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the north-west, others towards Mispheh, east-ward, but the parties Joshua sent out, pursued them each way. So *the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel*; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel, to be made proselytes, and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace, *Rom. xv. 16*. and therefore God delivered them into their hands; to be made sacrifices to his justice, for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

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2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general; that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor; for Israel was to dwell in great and goodly cities which they builded not, *Deut. vi. 10*, and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure. (1.) In the blood of their enemies, they smote all the souls, *ver. 11*. neither left they any to breathe, *ver. 14*. that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents. (2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle they took for a prey to themselves, *ver. 14*. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness, so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies; for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. This is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

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Joshua. The cutting off of the sons of Anak is particularly mentioned, because these had been such a terror to the spies forty years before, and their bulk and strength had been thought an insuperable difficulty in the way of the reducing of Canaan, *Numb. xiii. 28, 33.* Even that opposition which seemed invincible was got over. Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even *their day will come to fall.* Giants are dwarfs to omnipotence, yet this struggle with the Anakims was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites were become more expert in the arts of war, and had more experience of the power and goodness of God. Note, God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of his people by affliction and temptation for the latter end of their days. Therefore *let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off.* Death is the last enemy that is to be encountered, but it is *to be destroyed,* 1 Cor. xv. 26. and it is a son of Anak, thanks be to God, who will give us the victory. (4.) The end and issue of this long war. The Canaanites were rooted out, not perfectly (as we shall find after in the book of Judges) but in a good measure, they were not able to make any head, either, 1. So as to keep the Israelites out of possession of the land, *Joshua took all that land,* ver. 16, 17. And we may suppose the people dispersed themselves and their families into the countries they had conquered, at least those that lay nearest to the head quarters at Gilgal, until an orderly distribution should be made by lot, that every man might know his own. Or, 2. So as to keep them in action, or give them any molestation, *ver. 23. the land rested from war.* It ended not in a peace with the Canaanites, that was forbidden, but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, *remaining for the people of God,* into which they shall enter when their warfare is accomplished.

2. That which was now done, is here compared with that which *had been said to Moses*; God's word and his works, if viewed and considered together, will mutually illustrate each other. It is here observed in the close,

1. That all the precepts God had given to Moses relating to the conquest of Canaan, were obeyed on the peoples part, at least, while Joshua lived. See how solemnly this is remarked, *ver. 15. As the Lord commanded Moses his servant,* by whose hand the law was given, *so did Moses command Joshua,* for Moses was faithful, as a law-giver, to him that appointed him, he did his part, and then he died; but were the commands of Moses observed when he was in his grave? yes, they were, *so did Joshua,* who was in his place as faithful, as Moses in his, *He left nothing undone* (Heb. *he removed nothing*) *of all that the Lord commanded Moses.* They that leave their duty undone, do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are obliged to it, but Joshua by performing the precept confirmed it, as the expression is, *Deut. xxvii. 26.* Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more his praise than his obedience. They that rule others at their will, must themselves be ruled by the divine will, then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended, respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to *break down their altars, and burn their images,* *Deut. vii. 2—5. Exod. xxiii. 24.—xxxiv. 13.* Joshua in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols, nor the idolaters. Saul's disobedience, or rather his partial obedience to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalakites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem Joshua doth himself give this account of his most careful and punctual observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates, that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the commands of God in all this war, and valued himself more by that, than by all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced.

2. That all the promises God had given to Moses, relating to this conquest, were accomplished *on his part,* ver. 23. *Joshua took the whole land,* conquered it, and took possession of it, *according to all that the Lord said unto Moses.* God had promised to *drive out the nations before them,* *Exod. xxxiii. 29, 30.* and to *bring them down,* *Deut. ix. 3.* And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us, when we see them flowing to us from the promise; this is *according to what the Lord said*; as our obedience is then acceptable to God, when it has an eye to the precept. And if we make conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.

C H A P. XII.

This chapter is a summary of Israel's conquests; 1. *Their conquests under Moses, on the other side Jordan.* (for we now suppose our selves in Canaan) eastward, which we had the history of, *Numb. xxi. 24.* And here the abridgment of that history, ver. 1—6. 2. *Their conquests under Joshua, on this side Jordan, westward.* (1.) *The country they reduced,* ver. 7, 8. (2.) *The kings they subdued, thirty one in all,* ver. 9—34. And this comes in here, not only as a conclusion of the history of the wars of Canaan, that we might at one view see what they had got, but as a preface to the history of the dividing of Canaan, that all that might be put together which they were now to make a distribution of.

1. **N**OW these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan, toward the rising of the sun: from the river Arnon, unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east. 2. Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon: 3. And from the plain to the sea of Cinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea on the east, the way to Beth-jeshimoth: and from the south, under Ashdod-pisgah. 4. And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth, and at Edrei, 5. And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Geshurites, and the Maachathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6. Then did Moses the servant of the LORD, and the children of Israel smite, and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian, before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses recites their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note, Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the church, be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those that have gone before them, and were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together, proclaim him the *alpha* and *omega* of Israel's great salvation. Here is,

1. A description of this conquered country, the metes and bounds of it in general, *ver. 1. from the river Arnon* in the south, to *mount Hermon* in the north: In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon, *ver. 2, 3.* and that of Og, *ver. 4, 5.* Moses had described this country very particularly, *Deut. ii. 36.—iii. 4, &c.* and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei, *ver. 4.* probably because they were both his royal cities, he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one, and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer seat, and the other his winter seat; but Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him, that could not be content with one palace.

2. The distribution of this country; Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half at their request, and divided it among them, *ver. 6.* of which we had the story at large, *Numb. xxxii.* The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses, is here spoken as an example to Joshua, what he must do now he had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses in his time gave to one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan, but Joshua gave to all Israel, the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary, within Jordan; so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel, external temporal blessings, which were earnest of good things to come. But our Lord Jesus, the true Joshua, had provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings, the privileges of the sanctuary, and the heavenly Canaan; the triumphs and grants of the law were glorious, but those of the gospel far exceed in glory.

7. ¶ And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon, even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession, according to their divisions: 8. In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south-country: the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9. ¶ The king of Jericho, one: the king of Ai, which is beside Beth-el, one: 10. The king of Jerusalem, one: the king of Hebron, one: 11. The king of Jarmuth, one: the king of Lachish, one: 12. The king of Eglon, one: the king of Gezer, one: 13. The king of Debir, one: the king of Geder, one: 14. The king of Hormah, one: the king of Arad, one: 15. The king of Libnah, one: the king of Adullam, one: 16. The king of Makedah, one: the king of Beth-el, one: 17. The king of Tappuah, one: the king of He-phor, one: 18. The king of Aphek, one: the king of Lasharon, one: 19. The king of Madon, one: the king

king of Hazer, one : 20. The king of Shimron-meron, one : the king of Achshaph, one : 21. The king of Taanach, one : the king of Megiddo, one : 22. The king of Kedesh, one : the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one : 23. The king of Dor, in the coast of Dor, one : the king of the nations of Gilgal, one : 24. The king of Tirzah, one : all the kings thirty and one.

We have here a breviare of Joshua's conquests. 1. The limits of the country he conquered ; it lay between Jordan on the east, and the Mediterranean sea on the west, and extended from Baal-Gad near Lebanon in the north, to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, *ver. 7.* The boundaries are more largely described, *Numb. xxxiv. 2, &c.* only this here is enough to shew that God had been as good as his word, and had given them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

2. The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, *ver. 8.* There were mountains, not craggy and rocky and barren, which are frightful to the traveller, and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth *precious things*, *Deut. xxxiii. 15.* which charmed the spectator's eye, and filled the owner's hand. And vallies not mossy and boggy, but *covered with corn*, *Psal. lxxv. 13.* There were plains, and springs to water them, and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thick inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as foils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

3. The several nations that had been in possession of this country, Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, &c. all of them descended from Canaan, the accursed son of Ham, *Gen. x. 15—18.* Seven nations they are called, *Deut. vii. 1.* and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Girgashites being here either lost or left out ; tho' we find them, *Gen. x. 16.* and *xv. 21.* Either they were incorporated with some other of these nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua, they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

4. A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in their own cities. Thirty-one in all, and very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered ; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then the king of Jerusalem, and the princes of the south, that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now,

1. This shews what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could subsist so many kingdoms ; and in which so many kings chose to throng together, rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where tho' they might find more room they could not expect such plenty and pleasure ; this was the land God spied out for Israel. And yet at this day, it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unprofitable countries in the world ; such is the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his gospel, as was foretold by Moses, *Deut. xxix. 13.*

2. It shews what narrow limits mens ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government of each of them one city, and the towns and villages that pertained to it, and no one of them for ought appears aimed to make himself master of the rest ; but when there was occasion, united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories, was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command.

3. It shews how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to *observe his statutes, and to keep his laws*, *Psal. cv. 44, 45.* Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or seigniories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah, the kingdom of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnath, and Adullam, eight in all, besides part of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdom of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Makkedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, six in all. Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah, and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdom of Gezer and Tirzah. Manasseh (that half tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hepher, Taanach and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdom of Aphek and Achshaph. Zebulon had the kingdom of Lasharon, Shimron-meron and Jokneam ; Naphtali had the kingdom of Madon, Hazer, and Kedesh ; and Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, *for his mercy endureth for ever ; and gave their land for an heritage ; even a heritage unto Israel his servant ; for his mercy endureth for ever*, *Psal. cxxvi. 17, &c.*

C H A P. XIII.

*At this chapter begins the account of the dividing of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel by lot ; a narrative not so entertaining and instructive as that of the conquest of it, and yet is thought fit to be inserted in the sacred history, to illustrate the performance of the promise made to the fathers, that this land should be given to the seed of Jacob, to them and not to any other. The preserving of this distribution would be of great use to the Jewish nation, who were obliged by the law to keep up this first distribution, and not to transfer inheritances from tribe to tribe, Numb. xxxvi. 9. It is likewise of use to us for the explaining of other scriptures ; the learned know, how much light the geographical description of a country gives to the history of it. And therefore we are not to skip over these chapters of hard names, as useless and not to be regarded ; where God has a mouth to speak, and a hand to write, we should find an ear to hear, and an eye to read, and God give us a heart to profit ! In this chapter, 1. God informs Joshua what parts of the country, that were intended in the grant to Israel, yet remained unconquered, and not got into possession, *ver. 1—6.* 2. He appoints him notwithstanding to make a distribution of what was conquered, *ver. 7.* 3. To compleat this account here is a repetition of the distribution Moses had made of the land on the other side Jordan ; in general, *ver. 8—14.* In particular, the lot of Reuben, *ver. 15—23.* of Gad, *ver. 24—28.* of the half tribe of Manasseh, *ver. 29—33.**

1. **N**OW Joshua was old and stricken in years ; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. 2. This is the land that yet remaineth : all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri, 3. From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite : five lords of the Philistines ; the Gazathites, and the Ashdodites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites ; also the Avites. 4. From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites. 5. And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon toward the sun-rising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon, unto the entering into Hamath. 6. All the inhabitants of the hill-country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel : only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

Here, 1. God puts Joshua in mind of his old age, *ver. 1.* (1.) It is said that Joshua was *old and stricken in years*, and he and Caleb were at this time the only old men among the thousands of Israel ; none of all those who were numbred at mount Sinai being now alive, but they only. He had been a man of war from his youth, *Exod. xvii. 10.* but now yielding to the infirmities of age, with which it is in vain for the stoutest to think of contesting. It should seem Joshua had not the same strength and vigour in his old age that Moses had ; all that come to old age do not find it alike good, generally the days of old age prove evil days, and such as there is no pleasure in them, nor expectation of service from them. (2.) God takes notice of it to him, *God said to him, Thou art old.* Note, It is good for those who are *old and stricken in years*, to be put in remembrance of their being so. Some have *gray hairs here and there upon them, and perceive it not*, *Hos. vii. 9.* they do not care to think of it, and therefore need to be told of it, that they may be quickened to do the work of life, and make preparation for death which is coming towards them apace. But God mentions Joshua's age and growing infirmities, 1. As a reason why he should now lay by the thoughts of pursuing the war ; he cannot expect to see an end of it quickly, for there remained much land, more perhaps than he thought to be possessed, in several parts remote from each other : and it was not fit that at this age he should be put upon the fatigue of renewing the war, and carrying it to such distant places ; no, it was enough for him that he had reduced the body of the country, let him have his *quietus* given him with honour, and the thanks of his people, for the good services he had done them, and let the conquering of the skirts of the country be left for those that shall come after. As he had entered into the labours of Moses, so let others enter into his, and bring forth the top-stone ; the doing of which was reserved for David long after. Observe, God considers the frame of his people, and would not have them burthened with work above their strength. It cannot be expected that old people should do as they have done for God and their country. 2. As a reason why he should speedily apply himself to the dividing of that which he had conquered. That work must be done, and done quickly, it was necessary he should preside in the doing of it, and therefore he being *old and stricken in years*, and not likely to continue long, let

let him make that his concluding piece of service to God and Israel. All people, but especially old people, should set themselves to do that presently which must be done before they die, lest death prevent them, *Eccles. ix. 10.*

2. He gives him a particular account of the land that yet remained unconquered, which was intended for Israel's, and which, in due time, they should be masters of, if they did not put a bar in their own door. Divers places are here instanced in, some in the south, as the country of the Philistines, governed by five lords, and the land that lay towards Egypt, *ver. 2, 3.* Some westward, as that which lay towards the Sidonians, *ver. 4.* Some eastward, as all Lebanon, *ver. 5.* and some towards the north, as that in the entering in of Hamath, *ver. 5.* Joshua is told this, and he made the people acquainted with it. 1. That they might be the more affected with God's goodness to them in giving them this good land, and might thereby be engaged to love and serve him, for if this which they had was too little, God would moreover give them such and such things, *2 Sam. xii. 8.* 2. That they might not be tempted to make any league, or contract any dangerous familiarity with these their neighbours, so as to learn their way, but might rather be jealous of them, as people that kept them from their right, and that they had just cause of quarrel with. 3. That they might keep themselves in a posture for war, and not think of putting off the harness, as long as there remained any land to be possessed. Nor must we lay aside our spiritual armour, or be off our watch, till our victory be compleat in the kingdom of glory.

3. He promiseth, that he would make the Israelites masters of all those countries that were yet unsubdued, tho' Joshua was old, and not able to do it, old and not likely to live to see it done: Whatever becomes of us, and however we may be laid aside as despised broken vessels, God will do his own work in his own time, *ver. 6. I will drive them out.* The original is emphatical, *it is I that will do it; I that can do it, when thou art dead and gone, and will do it, if Israel be not wanting to themselves. I will do it by my Word, so the Chaldee here, as in many other places, by the eternal Word, the captain of the hosts of the Lord.* This promise that he would drive them out from before the children of Israel, plainly supposeth it as the condition of the promise, that the children of Israel must themselves attempt and endeavour their extirpation, must go up against them, else they could not be said to be driven out before them; if afterwards Israel through sloth, or cowardise, or affection to these idolaters, sit still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God if they be not driven out. We must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us, and work with us, we must resist our spiritual enemies, and then God will tread them under our feet, we must go forth to our Christian work and warfare, and then God will go forth before us.

7. Now therefore, divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh, 8. With whom the Reubenites, and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan east-ward, *even as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them:* 9. From Aroer that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Mereba unto Dibon: 10. And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon: 11. And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites, and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah: 12. All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth, and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out. 13. Nevertheless, the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day. 14. Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire, *are* their inheritance, as he said unto them. 15. ¶ And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben, *inheritance* according to their families: 16. And their coast was from Aroer that is on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain by Medeba: 17. Heshbon and all her cities that *are* in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon, 18. And Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, 19. And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zarethshahar, in the mount of the valley, 20. And Beth-peor, and Ashdodpiggah, and Beth-jeshimoth, 21. And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote, with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem,

and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, *which were* dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country. 22. ¶ Balaam also the son of Beor the soothsayer did the children of Israel slay with the sword, among them that were slain by them. 23. And the border of the children of Reuben, was Jordan and the border *thereof.* This *was* the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities, and the villages thereof. 24. And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the tribe of Gad; *even* unto the children of Gad, according to their families: 25. And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah: 26. And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim: and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir: 27. And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan and *his* border, *even* unto the edge of the sea of Cinnereth, on the other side Jordan east-ward. 28. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Gad, after their families, the cities and their villages. 29. ¶ And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the half-tribe of Manasseh: and *this was the possession* of the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh, by their families. 30. And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which *are* in Bashan, threescore cities: 31. And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, *were pertaining* unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, *even* to the one half of the children of Machir by their families. 32. These *are the countries* which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab on the other side Jordan, by Jericho east-ward. 33. But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not *any* inheritance: the LORD God of Israel *was* their inheritance, as he said unto them.

Here is, 1. Orders given to Joshua, to assign to each tribe their portion of this land, including that which was yet unsubdued, which must be brought into the lot, in a believing confidence, that it should be conquered when Israel was multiplied, so as to have occasion for it, *ver. 7. Now divide this land.* Joshua thought all must be conquered, before any must be divided, no, saith God, there is as much conquered as will serve your turn for the present, divide that, and make your best of it, and wait for the remainder hereafter. Note, We must take the comfort of what we have, tho' we cannot compass all we would have.

Observe, 1. The land must be divided among the several tribes, and they must not always live in common, as now they did. Which way soever a just property is acquired, it is the will of that God who has given the earth to the children of men, that there should be such a thing, and that every man should know his own, and not invade that which is another's. The world must be governed, not by force but right, by the law of equity, not of arms.

2. That it must be divided for an inheritance, tho' they got it by conquest. (1.) The promise of it came to them as an inheritance from their fathers; the land of promise pertained to the children of promise, who were thus beloved for their fathers sakes, and in performance of the covenant with them. (2.) The possession of it was to be transmitted by them, as an inheritance to their children. Many times what is got by force is soon lost again, but Israel having an incontestible title to this land by the divine grant, might see it thereby secured as an inheritance to their seed after them, and that God kept this mercy for thousands.

3. That Joshua must divide it, not by his own will, tho' he was a very wise, just, and good man, it must not be left to him to give what he pleased to each tribe, but he must do it by lot, which referred the matter wholly to God, and to his determination, for he it is that appointeth the bounds of our habitation, and every man's judgment must proceed from him. But Joshua must preside in this affair, must manage this solemn appeal to providence, and see that the lot was drawn fairly, and without fraud, and that every tribe did acquiesce in it. The lot indeed *causeth contention to cease*, Prov. xviii. 18. But if upon this lot any controversy should arise, Joshua by his wisdom and authority must determine it, and prevent any ill consequences of it. Joshua must have the honour of dividing the land, (1.) Because he had undergone the fatigue of conquering it, and when through his hand, each tribe received its allotment, they would thereby be made the more sensible of their obligations to him. And what a pleasure must it needs be to a man of such a publick spirit as Joshua was, to see the people that were so dear to him, eating the labour of his hands! (2.) That he might be herein a type of Christ, who has not only conquered for us the gates of hell, but has opened to us the gates of heaven, and having purchased the eternal inheritance for all believers, will in due time put them all in possession of it.

2. An account is here given of the distribution of the land on the other side Jordan, among the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, which comes in, (1.) As the reason why this land within Jordan must be divided only to the nine tribes and a half, because the other two and a half were already provided for. (2.) As a pattern to Joshua in the work he had now to do. He had seen Moses distribute that land, which would give him some aim in distributing this, and from thence he might take his measures; only this was to be done by lot, but it should seem Moses did that himself, according to the wisdom given unto him. (3.) As an inducement to Joshua to hasten the dividing of this land, that the nine tribes and a half might not be kept any longer than was necessary out of their possession, since their brethren of the two tribes and a half were so well settled in theirs; and God their common Father would not have such a difference made between his children.

1. Here is a general description of the country that was given to the two tribes and a half, which Moses gave them, even as Moses gave them, ver. 8. The repetition implies a ratification of the grant by Joshua, Moses settled that matter, and as Moses settled it, so it shall rest, Joshua will not, under any pretence whatsoever, go about to alter it. And a reason is intimated why he would not, because Moses was the servant of the Lord, and acted in this matter by secret direction from him, and was faithful as a servant.

Here we have, (1.) The fixing of the boundaries of this country, by which they were divided from the neighbour nations, ver. 9, &c. Israel must know their own, and keep to it, and may not under pretence of their being God's peculiar people, in-croach upon their neighbours, and invade their rights and properties, to which they had a good and firm title by providence, tho' not, as Israel, a title by promise. (2.) An exception of one part of this country from Israel's possession, tho' it was in their grant, viz. the Geshurites, and the Maacathites, ver. 13. They had not leisure to reduce all the remote and obscure corners of the country in Moses's time, and afterwards they had no mind to it, being easy with what they had: Thus those who are not straitened in God's promises, are yet straitened in their own faith, and prayers, and endeavours.

2. A very particular account of the inheritances of these two tribes and a half; how they were separated from each other, and what cities, with the towns, villages, and fields commonly known and reputed to be appurtenances to them, belonged to each tribe. This is very fully and exactly set down, 1. That posterity might in reading this history be the more affected with the goodness of God to their ancestors, when they found what a large and fruitful country, and what abundance of great and famous cities he put them in possession of. God's grants look best when we descend to the particulars. 2. That the limits of each tribe being punctually set down in this authentick record, disputes might be prevented, and such contestations between the tribes, as commonly happen where boundaries have not been adjusted, nor this matter brought to a certainty. And we have reason to think, that the register here prescribed and published of the lot of each tribe, was of great use to Israel in after-ages, was often appealed to, and always acquiesced in, for the determining of *meum* and *tuum*.

1. We have here the lot of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's first born; who tho' he had lost the dignity and power which pertained to the birthright, yet it seems had the advantage of being first served. Perhaps those of that tribe had an eye to this, in desiring to be seated on that side Jordan, that since they could not expect the benefit of the best lot, they might have the credit of the first. In the account of the lot of this tribe, mention is made of the slaughter, (1.) Of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in this country, and might have kept it, and his life, if he would have been neighbourly, and have suffered Israel to pass through his territories, but by attempting to oppose them, justly brought ruin upon himself, *Numb. xxi. 21.* (2.) Of the princes of Midian who were slain afterwards in another war, *Numb. xxxi. 8.* And yet are here called dukes of Sihon, and are said to be smitten with him, because they were either tributaries to him, or, in his opposition to Israel, confederates with him, and hearty in his interests, and his fall made way for theirs, not long after. (3.) Of Balaam particularly, that would, if he could, have cursed Israel, and was soon after recompensed according to the wickedness of his endeavour, *Psalm xxviii. 4.* For he fell with those that set him on. This was recorded before, *Numb. xxxi. 8.* and is here repeated, because the defeating of Balaam's purpose to curse Israel, was the turning of that curse into a blessing, was such an instance of the power and goodness of God, as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance. See *Mic. vi. 5.*

Within the lot of this tribe was that mount Pisgah, from the top of which Moses took his view of the earthly Canaan, and his sight to the heavenly. And not far off thence Elijah was, when he was fetched up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The separation of this tribe from the rest by the river Jordan, was that which Deborah lamented, and the preference they gave to their private interests above the publick, was what she censured, *Judg. v. 15, 16.* In this tribe lay Heshbon and Sibmah, famed for their fruitful fields and vineyards. See *Isa. xvi. 8, 9. Jer. xlviii. 32.* This tribe, with that of Gad, was sorely shaken by Hazael king No. xvi.

of Syria, *2 Kings x. 33.* and afterwards dislodged and carried into captivity twenty years before the general captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, *1 Chron. v. 26.*

2. The lot of the tribe of Gad, ver. 24—28. This lay north of Reuben's lot; the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm, that it is thought strange indeed, if there be no balm in Gilead, and the cities of Jabesh-Gilead, and Ramoth-Gilead, which we often read of in scripture. Succoth and Peniel, which we read of in the story of Gideon, were in this tribe; and that forest which is called the wood of Ephraim (from the slaughter Jephtha made there of the Ephraimites) in which Absalom's rebellious army was beaten, while his father David lay at Mahanaim, one of the frontier cities of this tribe, ver. 26. Sharon was in this tribe, famous for roses. And within the limits of this tribe lived those Gadarens, that loved their swine better than their Saviour, fitter to be called Gergashites than Israelites.

3. The lot of the half tribe of Manasseh, ver. 29—31. Bashan, the kingdom of Og, was in this allotment, famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan, and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and rams of Bashan. This tribe lay north of Gad, reached to mount Hermon, and had in it part of Gilead. Mizpeh was in this half tribe, and Jephtha was one of its ornaments; so was Elijah, for in this tribe was Thisbe, whence he is called the Tishbite, and Jair was another. In the edge of the tribe stood Chorazin, honoured with Christ's wondrous works, but ruined by his righteous wo for not improving them.

Lastly, Twice in this chapter it is taken notice of that to the tribe of Levi, *Moses gave no inheritance*, ver. 14, 33. for so God had appointed, *Numb. xviii. 20.* If they had been to have a lot intire by themselves, Moses would have served them first, not because it was his own tribe, but because it was God's, but they must be provided for in another manner; their habitations must be scattered in all the tribes, and their maintenance brought out of all the tribes, and God himself was the portion both of their inheritance, and of their cup, *Deut. x. 9.—xviii. 2.*

C H A P. XIV.

Here is, 1. The general method that was taken in dividing the land, ver. 1—5. 2. The demand Caleb made of Hebron, as his by promise, and therefore not to be put into the lot with the rest, ver. 6—12. And Joshua's grant of that demand, ver. 14, 15. This was done at Gilgal, which was as yet their head-quarters.

1. **A**ND these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed for inheritance unto them. 2. By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe. 3. For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes, and an half-tribe, on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them. 4. For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle, and for their substance. 5. As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land. 6. ¶ Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God, concerning me and thee, in Kadesh-barnea.

The historian having, in the foregoing chapter, given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side Jordan, now comes to tell us what they did with the countries in the land of Canaan. They were not conquered to be left desert, a *habitation for dragons, and a court for owls*, (*Isa. xxxiv. 13.*) No, the Israelites that had hitherto been closely incamped in a body, and the greatest part of them, such as never knew any other way of living, must now disperse themselves to replenish these new conquests. It is said of the earth, *God created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited*, *Isa. xlv. 18.* Canaan would have been subdued in vain, if it had not been inhabited. Yet every man might not go and settle where he pleased, but as there seems to have been in the days of Peleg, an orderly and regular division of the habitable earth among the sons of Noah, *Gen. x. 25, 32.* so there was now such a division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob. God had given Moses directions how this distribution should be made, and those directions are here punctually observed. See *Numb. xxvii. 53, &c.*

1. The managers of this great affair, were Joshua, the chief magistrate, Eleazar the chief priest, and ten princes, one of each of the tribes that were now to have their inheritance, whom God himself

himself had nominated (*Numb. xxxiv. 17, &c.*) some years before, and it should seem they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe having a representative of its own might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

2. The tribes among whom this dividend was to be made, were nine and a half, (1.) Not the two and a half that were already seated, *ver. 3.* tho' perhaps now they saw what a good land Canaan was, and how effectually it was subdued, they might some of them repent their choice, and wish they had now been to have their lot with their brethren, upon which condition they would gladly have given up what they had on the other side Jordan, but it would not be admitted, they had made their election without power of revocation, and so must their doom be, themselves have divided it; they must stick as they chose. (2.) Not the tribe of Levi, that was to be otherwise provided for. God had distinguished them from, and dignified them above, the other tribes, and they must not now mingle themselves with them, nor cast in their lot among them, for that would intangle them in the affairs of this life, which would not consist with a due attendance on their sacred function. But, (3.) Joseph made two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, pursuant to Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons, and so the number of the tribes was kept up to twelve, tho' Levi was taken out, which is intimated here, *ver. 4.* *The children of Joseph were two tribes, therefore they gave no part to Levi,* they being twelve without him.

3. The rule by which they went was the lot, *ver. 2.* *The disposal of that is of the Lord,* *Prov. xvi. 33.* and it was here used in an affair of weight, and which could not otherwise be accommodated to universal satisfaction, and it was used in a solemn religious manner as an appeal to God, by consent of parties. In dividing by lot, (1.) They referred themselves to God, and to his wisdom and sovereignty, believing him fitter to determine for them, than they for themselves, *Psal. xlvii. 4.* *He shall chuse our inheritance for us.* (2.) They professed a willingness to abide by the determination of it; for every man must take what is his lot, and make the best of it. In allusion to this, we are said to *obtain an inheritance in Christ,* *Eph. i. 11.* *ἐκληρώθημεν,* we have obtained it by lot. So the word signifies; for it is obtained by a divine designation, Christ, our Joshua, gives eternal life to *as many as were given him,* *John xvii. 2.*

7. Forty years old *was* I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as *it was* in mine heart. 8. Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me, made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 9. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden, shall be thine inheritance, and thy childrens for ever: because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God. 10. And now behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while *the children of Israel* wandered in the wilderness: and now lo, I *am* this day fourscore and five years old. 11. As yet I *am* as strong this day, as *I was* in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength *was* then, even so *is* my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in. 12. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day, (for thou heardst in that day how the Anakims *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great and fenced) if so be the LORD *will* be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said. 13. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. 14. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenzite, unto this day: because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. 15. And the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba, *which Arba was* a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Before the lot was cast into the lap for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, the particular portion of Caleb is assigned him, who was now, except Joshua, not only the oldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older than any of them, for all that were above twenty years old when he was forty were dead in the wilderness, it was fit therefore that this phoenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land.

Now, 1. Caleb here presents his petition, or rather makes his demand, to have Hebron given him for a possession, (*this mountain* he calls it, *ver. 12.*) and not to have that put into the lot, with the other parts of the country. To justify his demand, he shews

that God had long since, by Moses, promised him *that very mountain*; so that God's mind being already made known in this matter, it would be a vain and needless thing to consult it any further, by casting lots, by which we are to appeal to God in those cases only, which cannot otherwise be decided, not in those, which like this here, are already determined. Caleb is here called the Kenzite, some think, from some remarkable victory obtained by him over the Kenzites, as the Romans gave their great generals titles from the countries they conquered, as Africanus, Germanicus, &c.

To enforce his petition, (1.) He brings the children of Judah, *i. e.* the heads and great men of that tribe along with him to present it, who were willing thus to pay their respects to that ornament of their tribe, and to testify their consent that he should be provided for by himself, and that they would not take it as any reflection upon the rest of his tribe. Caleb was the person whom God had chosen out of that tribe to be employed in dividing the land, *Numb. xxxiv. 19.* And therefore lest he should seem to improve his authority as a commissioner for his own private advantage and satisfaction, he brings his brethren along with him, and, waving his own power, seems rather to rely upon their interest. (2.) He appeals to Joshua himself concerning the truth of the allegations, upon which he grounded his petition. *Thou knowest the thing,* *ver. 6.* (3.) He makes a very honourable mention of Moses, which he knew would not be at all displeasing to Joshua, Moses the *man of God,* *ver. 6.* and the *servant of the Lord,* *ver. 7.* What Moses said he took as from God himself, because Moses was his mouth, and his agent, and therefore he had reason both to desire and expect it should be made good: what can be more earnestly desired than the tokens of God's favour? And what more confidently expected than the grants of his promise?

Caleb, in his petition sets forth,

(1.) The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity in the management of that great affair, on which it proved the fate of Israel turned, the spying out of the land. Caleb was one of the twelve that was sent out on that errand, *ver. 7.* and he now reflected upon it with comfort, and mentioned it not in pride; but as that which, being the consideration of the grant, was necessary to be inserted in this plea, (1.) That he made his report as it was in his heart, *i. e.* he spake as he thought, when he spake so honourably of the land of Canaan, so confidently of the power of God to put them in possession of it, and so contemptibly of the opposition that the Canaanites, even the Anakims themselves, could make against them, as we find he did, *Numb. xiii. 30.—xiv. 7, 8, 9.* He did not do it merely to please Moses, or to keep the people quiet, much less from a spirit of contradiction to his fellows, but from a full conviction of the truth of what he said, and a firm belief of the divine promise. (2.) That herein he *wholly followed the Lord his God,* *i. e.* he kept close to his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He conformed himself to the divine will with an eye to the divine favour. He had obtained this testimony from God himself, *Numb. xiv. 24.* and therefore it was not vain glory in him to speak of it, no more than it is for those who have *God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits,* that they are the children of God, humbly and thankfully to tell others for their encouragement what God has done for their souls. Note, They that follow God fully when they are young, shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever in the heavenly Canaan. (3.) That he did this when all his brethren and companions in that service, except Joshua, did otherwise. *They made the heart of the people melt,* *ver. 8.* and how pernicious the consequences of it were, was very well known. It adds much to the praise of following God, if we adhere to him, when others desert and decline from him. Caleb needed not to mention particularly Joshua's carriage in this matter, it was sufficiently known, and he would not seem to flatter him; it was enough to say, *ver. 6.* *Thou knowest what the Lord spake concerning me and thee.*

(2.) The experience he had had of God's goodness to him ever since, to this day. Tho' he had wandered with the rest in the wilderness, and had been kept thirty-eight years out of Canaan, as they were, for that sin, which he was so far from having a hand in, that he had done his utmost to prevent it; yet instead of complaining of that, he mentions to the glory of God his mercy to him in two things, (1.) That he was kept alive in the wilderness, not only notwithstanding the common perils and fatigues of that tedious march, but tho' all that generation of Israelites, except himself and Joshua, were one way or other cut off by death: with what a grateful sense of God's goodness to him doth he speak it! *ver. 10.* *Now behold,* (behold and wonder) *the Lord has kept me alive these forty and five years,* thirty-eight years in the wilderness, through the plagues of the desert, and seven years in Canaan through the perils of war. Note, (1.) While we live, it is God that keeps us alive, by his power he protects us from death, and by his bounty he supplies us continually with the supports and comforts of life. *He holdeth our soul in life.* (2.) The longer we live, the more sensible we should be of God's goodness to us in keeping us alive, his care in prolonging our frail lives, his patience in prolonging our forfeited lives. Has he kept me alive these forty-five years? Is it about that time of life with us? Or is it more? Or is it less? We have reason to say, *it is of the Lord's mercies that we are*

are not consumed, how much we are indebted to the favour of God, and what shall we render? Let the life thus kept by the providence of God be devoted to his praise. (3.) The death of many others round about us, should make us the more thankful to God for sparing us, and keeping us alive. Thousands falling on our right hand, and on our left, and yet we spared, these distinguishing favours are very obliging to singular obedience. (2.) That he was fit for business now he was in Canaan. Tho' eighty-five years old, yet as hearty and lively as when he was forty, *ver. 11. As my strength was then, so it is now.* This was the fruit of the promise, and out-did what was said; for God not only gives what he promiseth, but he gives more; life by promise, shall be life, and health, and strength, and all that which will make the promised life a blessing and comfort. Moses had said in his prayer, *Psal. xc. 10. that at eighty years old even the strength is labour and sorrow,* and so it is most commonly, but Caleb was an exception from that rule; his strength at eighty-five was ease and joy, this he got by following the Lord fully. Caleb takes notice of this here to the glory of God, and as an excuse for his asking a portion which he must fetch out of the giants hands, let not Joshua tell him he *knew not what he asked*; could he get the possession of that which he begged for a title to? Yes, saith he, why not, I am as fit for war now as ever I was.

(3.) The promise Moses had made him in God's name, that he should have *this mountain*, *ver. 9.* This promise is his chief plea, and that on which he relies. As we find it, *Numb. xiv. 24.* It is general, *him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it,* but it seems it was more particular, and Joshua knew it, both sides understood this mountain for which Caleb was now a suiter to be intended. This was the place from which more than any other the spies took their report, for here they met with the sons of Anak, *Numb. xiii. 22.* the sight of whom made such an impression upon them, *ver. 33.* We may suppose, that Caleb observing what stresses they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how from thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, in opposition to their suggestions, and to convince the people that he spake as he thought, he bravely desired to have that city which they called invincible, assigned to himself for his own portion; I will undertake to deal with that, and if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will be without. Well, saith Moses, it shall be thine own then, win it and wear it. Such a noble heroick spirit Caleb had, and so desirous was he to inspire his brethren with it, that he chose this place only because it was the most difficult to be conquered. And to shew that his soul did not decay any more than his body, now forty-five years after he adheres to his choice, and is still of the same mind.

(4.) The hopes he had of being master of it, tho' the sons of Anak were in possession of it, *ver. 12. If the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out.* The city of Hebron, Joshua had already reduced, *chap. x. 37.* but the mountain which belonged to it, and which was inhabited by the sons of Anak, was yet unconquered, for tho' the cutting off of the Anakims from Hebron was mentioned, *chap. xi. 21.* because the historian would relate all the military actions together, yet it seems it was not done till after they had begun to divide the land. Observe, He builds his hopes of driving out the sons of Anak upon the presence of God with him. He doth not say, because I am now as strong for war as I was at forty, therefore I should drive them out, depending upon his personal valour; nor doth he depend upon his interest in the warlike tribe of Judah, who attended him now in making this address, and no doubt would assist him. Nor doth he court Joshua's aid, or put it upon that, *if thou wilt be with me, I shall gain my point.* But *if the Lord will be with me.* Here, 1. He seems to speak doubtfully of God's being with him, not from any distrust from his goodness or faithfulness. He had spoken without the least hesitation of God's presence with Israel in general, *Numb. xiv. 9. the Lord is with us,* but for himself from a humble sense of his own unworthiness of such a favour, he chuses to express himself thus, *If the Lord will be with me.* The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *If the Word of the Lord be my helper,* that Word which is God, and in the fulness of time was made flesh, and is the captain of our salvation. 2. But he speaks without the least doubt, has assurance that if God were with him he should be able to dispossess the sons of Anak. If God be with us, *If God be for us, who can be against us,* so as to prevail? It is also intimated, that if God were not with him, tho' all the forces of Israel should come in to his assistance, he should not be able to gain his point. Whatever we undertake, God's favourable presence with us is all in all to our success; that therefore we must earnestly pray for, and carefully make sure, by keeping our selves in the love of God; and on that we must depend, and from that take our encouragement against the greatest difficulties.

Upon the whole matter Caleb's request is, *ver. 12. give me this mountain.* (1.) Because it was formerly in God's promise, and he would let Israel know how much he valued the promise; insisting upon *this mountain whereof the Lord spake in that day,* as most desirable, tho' perhaps as good a portion might have fallen to him by lot in common with the rest. They that live by faith, value that which is given by promise, far above that which is given by providence only. (2.) Because it was now in the Anakims pos-

session, and he would let Israel know how little he feared the enemy, and would by his example animate them to push on their conquests. Herein Caleb answered his name, which signifies *all heart.*

2. Joshua grants his petition, *ver. 13. Joshua blessed him,* commended his bravery, applauded his request, and gave him what he asked. He also prayed for him, and for his good success in his intended undertaking against the sons of Anak. Joshua was both a prince and a prophet, and upon both accounts it was proper for him to give Caleb his blessing, for *the less is blessed of the better.* Hebron was settled on Caleb and his heirs, *ver. 14. because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.* And happy are we if we follow him. Note, Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours. Now (1.) We are here told what Hebron had been; the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakims, *ver. 15.* we find it called Kirjath-arba, *Gen. xxiii. 2.* as the place where Sarah died. Hereabouts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lived most of their time in Canaan, and near to it was the cave of Machpelah where they were buried, which perhaps had led Caleb hither, when he went to spy out the land, and had made him covet this rather than any other part for his inheritance. (2.) We are afterwards told what Hebron was. (1.) It was a priests city, *Josh. xxi. 13.* and a city of refuge, *Josh. xx. 7.* when Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests the Lords ministers; thinking it could not be better bestowed, no not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God. (2.) It was a royal city, and in the beginning of David's reign, the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah; thither his people resorted to him, and there he reigned seven years. Thus highly was Caleb's city honoured, pity there should have been such a blemish upon his family long after, as Nabal was, who was *of the house of Caleb,* 1 Sam. xxv. 3. But the best men cannot entail their virtues.

CHAP. XV.

The land though not compleatly conquered, yet being (as was said in the close of the foregoing chapter) at rest from war, for the present, their armies all drawn out of the field, to a general rendezvous at Gilgal, there they began to divide the land, tho' the work was afterwards perfected at Shiloh, chap. xviii. 1, &c. In this chapter we have the lot of the tribe of Judah, which in this as in other things had the precedency; 1. The borders or bounds of the inheritance of Judah, ver. 1—12. 2. The particular assignment of Hebron, and the country thereabouts to Caleb, and his family, ver. 13—19. 3. The names of the several cities that fell within Judah's lot, ver. 21—63.

1. **T**HIS then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families, *even to the border of Edom; the wilderness of Zin south-ward, was the uttermost part of the south-coast.* 2. And their south-border was from the shore of the salt-sea, from the bay that looketh south-ward. 3. And it went out to the south-side to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south-side unto Kadesh-barnea: and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa. 4. From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south-coast. 5. And the east-border was the salt-sea, *even unto the end of Jordan: and their border in the north-quarter was from the bay of the sea, at the uttermost part of Jordan.* 6. And the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 7. And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so north-ward looking toward Gilgal, that is before the going up to Adummim, which is on the south-side of the river: and the border passed towards the waters of En-shemesh, and the goings out thereof were at Enrogel. 8. And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom, unto the south-side of the Jebusite, the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain, that lieth before the valley of Hinnom, west-ward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants north-ward. 9. And the border was drawn from the top of the hill, unto the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron, and the border was drawn to Baalah, which is Kirjath-jearim. 10. And the border compassed from Baalah west-ward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim (which is Chesalon) on the north-side, and went down

to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. 11. And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Balaah, and went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea. 12. And the west-border was to the great sea, and the coast thereof: this is the coast of the children of Judah, round about, according to their families.

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob, on whom Reuben's forfeited birthright devolved, Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated; Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan, were appendent to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulun, Naphtali and Asher to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterwards, chap. xviii. 9. It is probable, the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and by the decision of that lot, the southern country fell to Judah, of which we have an account in this chapter, and the northern to Joseph, of which we have an account in the two following chapters. And when this was done, there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition, *Numb. xxxiii. 54. to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less, and that every man's inheritance shall be where his lot falleth, i. e. ye shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be lesser portions to be allotted to the less numerous tribes.* The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.

In these verses we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which as the rest is said to be by their families, i. e. with an eye to the number of their families. And it intimates that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterwards (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and then to each household, which would be better done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust, than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution.

The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterwards assigned to the lots of Simeon and Dan. (1.) The eastern border was all, and only the salt-sea, ver. 5. Every sea is salt, but this was an extraordinary, and more than natural saltness, the effect of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved it self, or had any living thing in it.

(2.) The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general, as will appear by comparing, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. with *Num. xxxiv. 3, 4, 5.* So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay towards their old sworn enemies, (tho' their two fathers were twin-brethren) the Edomites. Our Lord therefore who sprang out of Judah, and whose the kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Esau, *Obad. 21.*

(3.) The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this mention is made of the stone of Bohan a Reubenite, ver. 6. who probably was a great commander of those forces of Reuben that came over Jordan, and died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor doth likewise lie upon this border, ver. 7. to mind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched close upon Jerusalem, ver. 8. so close as to include in the lot of this tribe mount Zion and mount Moriah, tho' the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin.

(4.) The west border went near to the great sea at first, ver. 12. but afterwards, the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph which should have the north, and which the south, and not immoveably to fix the border of either.

Judah's inheritances had its boundaries determined; tho' it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high, yet must not think to be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

13. ¶ And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. 14. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Shephai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. 15. And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher. 16. ¶ And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 17. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 18. And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? 19. Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south-land, give me also springs of water: and he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb, and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron, for his inheritance, is here repeated, ver. 13. And it is said to be given him, (1.) According to the command of the Lord to Joshua. Tho' Caleb in this petition had made out a very good title to it by promise, yet because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted upon this occasion. In every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain. (2.) It is said to be a part among the children of Judah; tho' it was assigned him before the lot of that tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren, and surrounded by those of other tribes.

Now Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told,

1. How he signalized his own valour in the conquest of Hebron, ver. 14. He drove thence the three sons of Anak; he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here, to shew that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair through the presence of God with him, chap. xiv. 12. did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he slew these giants, but he drove them thence, which intimates that they retired upon his approach, and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but with the countenances of lions, they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus doth God often cut off the spirit of princes, *Psal. lxxvi. 12. take away the heart of the chief of the people, Job. xii. 24.* and so shame the confidences of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, tho' he fall not, yet he will flee.

2. How he encouraged the valour of those about him in the conquest of Debir, ver. 15, &c. It seems, tho' Joshua had once made himself master of Debir, chap. x. 39. yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work was to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to shew his zeal for the publick good, as much as for his own private interest, he pusheth on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles southward from Hebron, tho' he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence; not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage our selves for the welfare of our community we are members of; we are not born for our selves, nor must we live to our selves.

1. Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called Kirjath-sepher, the city of a book, and Kirjath-fanaa (ver. 49.) which some translate the city of learning; so the *LXX Πόλις γερμμάτων*, whence some conjecture that it had been a university among the Canaanites, like Athens, in Greece; in which their youth were educated; or, perhaps the books of their chronicles, or records, or the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and it may be this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel masters of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

2. The profer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a good portion with her, to any one that would undertake to reduce that city, and to command the forces that should be employed in that service, ver. 16. Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would kill Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 25. neither of them intending to force their daughter to marry such as they could not affect, but both of them presuming upon their daughter's obedience, and submission to their father's will, tho' it might perhaps be contrary to

to their own humour or inclination. Caleb's family was not only honourable and wealthy but religious; he that himself followed the Lord fully, no question taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb in making the proposal, aims, 1. To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place: And, 2. To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning that would have a particular affection for the city of books, and a man of war that would be likely to serve his country, and do worthily in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

3. The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb's, whom, probably, Caleb had thoughts of when he made the offer, ver. 7. This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, long after, in his advanced years, was spirited to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death; it is good for those who are setting out in the world, to begin betimes with that which is great and good; that excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

4. Hereupon (all parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german, Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is likely he had a kindness for her before, which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, an ambition of honour, and a desire to find favour with the princes of his people, would not have engaged him in this great action, but his affection for Achsah did, that made it intolerable to him, to think that any one else should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

5. Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion which was in land, as more valuable, because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, tho' we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too. (2.) Some land she obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as Zelophehad's daughters did. He gave her a south-land, ver. 19. Land indeed, but a south-land, dry, and apt to be parched. (3.) She obtained more upon her request, she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably some particular field, or champian ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south-land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more proper for her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, tho' contrary to her own; and she humoured the thing wonderful well, and managed it with a great deal of art. 1. She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well, would make him think nothing too much to do for her. 2. She lighted off her ass, in token of respect and reverence to her father, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She cried, or sighed, from off her ass, so the LXX and the vulgar Latin read it, she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted. 3. She calls it a blessing, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure, that since she married, not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing. (4.) She asks only for the water, without which the ground she had would be of little use, either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were; the modesty and reasonableness of her request gave it a great advantage. Earth without water, would be like a tree without sap, or the body of an animal without blood; therefore when God gathered the waters into one place, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See *Psal.* civ. 10, &c. Well, Achsah gained her point, her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs. Two fields, so called from the springs that were in them; as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field. Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven, and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, give countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls, as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body, and the life that now is, as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story, we learn, 1. That it is no breach of the tenth commandment, moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life, which we see attainable in a fair and regular way. 2. That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs. 3. That parents must never think that lost which

No. xvi.

is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons; 1 *Chron.* iv. 15. and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relation, who grudge their children what is convenient for them, when they can conveniently part with it.

20. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families. 21. And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom south-ward, were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur, 22. And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah, 23. And Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan, 24. Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth, 25. And Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, and Hezron, which is Hazor, 26. Amam, and Shema, and Moladah, 27. And Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet, 28. And Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah, 29. Baalah, and Iim, and Azem, 30. And Eltolad, and Chefil, and Hormah, 31. And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sansannah, 32. And Lebaoth, and Shilhim, and Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages. 33. And in the valley, Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah, 34. And Zanoah, and Engannim, Tappuah, and Enam, 35. Jarmuth, and Adullam, Sochoh, and Azekah, 36. And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages. 37. Zenan, and Hadathah, and Migdalgad, 38. And Dilean, and Mizpeh, and Joktheel, 39. Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon, 40. And Cabbon, and Lahmas, and Kithlish, 41. And Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages. 42. Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan, 43. And Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib, 44. And Keilah, and Achzib, and Maresah: nine cities with their villages. 45. Ekron with her towns, and her villages. 46. From Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages. 47. Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border thereof. 48. ¶ And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Sochoh, 49. And Dannah, and Kirjath-sannah, which is Debir, 50. And Anab, and Elthemoh, and Anim, 51. And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages. 52. Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean, 53. And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah, 54. And Humtah, and Kirjath-arba (which is Hebron) and Zior: nine cities with their villages. 55. Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah, 56. And Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah, 57. Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages. 58. Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor, 59. And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages. 60. Kirjath-baal (which is Kirjath-jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages. 61. ¶ In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah, 62. And Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi: six cities with their villages. 63. As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it, and keep to it, and might neither, through cowardice or sloth, lose the possession of what was their own, nor, through covetousness, seek the possession of what was not their own. The cities are here named, and numbred in several classes, which they then could account for the reason of better than we can now. Here are, (1.) Some that are said to be the uttermost cities toward the coast of Edom, ver. 21, 32. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be twenty-nine, ver. 32. because nine of these were afterwards transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing, *chap.* xix. 2, &c. therefore those only are counted, (tho' the rest are named) which remained to Judah. (2.) Others that are said to be in the valley, ver. 33. they are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named, but it is probable Gederah, and Gederathaim were either two names, or two parts, of one and the same city. (3.) Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, ver. 37—41. and nine more, ver. 42—44. (4.) Then the three Philistine cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza. (5.) Cities in the mountains, eleven in all, ver. 48—51. nine more

more, *ver.* 52—54. ten more, *ver.* 55—57. six more, *ver.* 58, 59. then two, *ver.* 60. and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as some others were.

Now here, (1.) We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterwards the city of David, and was ennobled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but *little among the thousands of Judah*, Mic. v. 2. except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honours from them. (2.) Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites, *ver.* 63. *for the children of Judah could not drive them out*, viz. through their sluggishness, stupidity, and unbelief; had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them, to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not; Jerusalem was afterwards to be the holy city, the royal city, the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel, God had designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities God had given them, that they were so long kept out of this.

Among the cities of Judah, (in all one hundred and fourteen) we meet with Libnah, which in Joram's days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state, 2 Kings viii. 22. and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain, 1 Kings xiv. 19. it led the dance in idolatry, Micah i. 13. it was the *beginning of sin to the daughter of Sion*. Giloh, Achitophel's town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, 2 Chron. xx. 20. and Maresha where Aza was a conqueror. Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David's troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Ziklag, were places here reckoned in this tribe, near which David had most of his haunts, for tho' sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached; and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, Matth. iii. 1. The riches of this country, no doubt, answered Jacob's blessing of this tribe, that he should *wash his garments in wine*, Gen. xlix. 11. And in general, *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, not envy.

C H A P. XVI.

It is pity this and the following chapter should be separated, for both of them give us the lot of the children of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who, next to Judah, were to have the post of honour, and therefore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah now had in the southern part. In this chapter, we have, (1.) A general account of the lot of these two tribes together, ver. 1—4. (2.) The borders of the lot of Ephraim in particular, ver. 5—10. That of Manasseh following in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho, throughout mount Beth-el, 2. And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth, 3. And goeth down west-ward, to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea. 4. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

Tho' Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife, Rachel; was himself *his best beloved son*, and had been the greatest ornament and support of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east, *ver.* 1. to the sea, the Mediterranean sea in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and, no question, the fruitfulness of the soil answered the blessings both of Jacob and Moses, Gen. xlix. 25, 26. and Deut. xxxiii. 13.

The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh, are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes: we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah, and afterwards those of the other tribes. For which no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua, being himself of the children of Joseph, they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes which sat upon this affair; by which means it came to pass they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

5. ¶ And the border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was *thus*: even the border of their inheritance on the east-side, was Ataroth-addar unto Beth-horon the upper. 6. And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north-side, and the border went about east-ward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah: 7. And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan. 8. The border went out from Tappuah west-ward unto the river Kanah: and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families. 9. And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. 10. And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Here, 1. The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Benjamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan to the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions, here find themselves very much at a loss, the description here being short and intricate. The report of those, who in these latter ages have travelled these countries, will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed, as that no mark or footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and *even the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place*, Job xiv. 18. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them: no doubt, they were then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording them was effectually answered, which was, to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means remove.

2. Some separate cities are spoken of, that lay not within these borders, at least not if the line were drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh, *ver.* 9. which might better be read, *and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim, among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh*, because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had need of them, and it might be hoped that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should *love as brethren*. And by this, it appears, that tho' when the tribes were numbred in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then fifty-two thousand, and Ephraim but thirty-two thousand, Numb. xxvi. 34, 37. yet by that time they were well settled in Canaan, the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, Deut. xxxiii. 17. *There are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and there are the thousands of Manasseh*. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleaseth.

3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer, *ver.* 10. Either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that he would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort; or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged *them utterly to drive out the Canaanites*, and to make no peace with them. And tho' they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) that made the matter worse, for it shews that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute, they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think so, but that we find in the sequel of the story, that the Israelites were so far from refraining idolatry in others, that they soon fell into it themselves.

Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, tho' not mentioned here. In it was Ramah, Samuel's city, called in the New Testament, Arimathea, of which Joseph was that took care of our Saviour's burial, and Shiloh, where the tabernacle was first set up. Tirzah, also the royal city of Jeroboam, and his successors. Deborah's palm-tree, under which she judged Israel was in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri, after the burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it was Shechem, and the mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city, called Ephraim, it is probable, in this tribe to which Christ retired, John xi. 54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called Ephraim.

C H A P. XVII.

The half tribe of Manasseh comes next to be provided for; and here we have, 1. The families of that tribe that were to be portioned, ver. 1—6. 2. The country that fell to their lot, ver. 7—13. 3. The joint request of the two tribes that descended from Joseph, for the enlargement of their lot, and Joshua's answer to that request, ver. 14—18.

1. **T**Here was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; (for he was the first-born of Joseph) to wit, for Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan. 2. There was also a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hepher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families. 3. ¶ But Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 4. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren: therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. 5. And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan; 6. Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided.

1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, who were the posterity of Machir, ver. 1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt, there he had signified himself as a man of war, probably in the rencounters that were between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, 1 Chron. vii. 21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, chap. xiii. 31. It is here said that the lot came from Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, *tho' he was the first born of Joseph*, and then the meaning is plain, that the second lot was for Manasseh, because tho' he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him. See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, 1 Chron. v. 24.

2. That part on this side Jordan was subdivided into ten families, ver. 5. There were six sons of Gilead here named, ver. 2. the same that are recorded, Numb. xxvi. 30. only that he who is there called Jeezer, is here called Abiezer; five of these sons had each of them their portion, the sixth, which was Hepher, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; tho' perhaps they claiming under Hepher, all their five portions were but equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Hepher had other sons besides Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See Numb. xxxvi. 12.

Here is, 1. The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the command God gave to Moses concerning them, ver. 4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren, and now they would not lose the benefit of that grant for want of speaking to Joshua, but seasonably put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them. 2. The assignment of their portions according to their claim; Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object, that they having not served in the wars of Canaan, there was no reason they should share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal, and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus they who take care in the wilderness of this world, to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light, will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now will lose it for ever.

7. ¶ And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that *lieth* before Shechem, and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of Entappuah. 8. Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim. 9. And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, south-ward of the river: these cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north-side of the river, and the out-goings of it were at the sea. 10. South-ward it was Ephraim, and northward it was Manasseh, and the sea is his border, and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east. 11. And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher, Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries. 12. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 13. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

We have here a short account of the lot of this half tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east, to the great sea on the west, on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it butted upon Asher and Issachar; Asher lay north-west, and Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of that, ver. 10. that they (*i. e.* Manasseh and Ephraim, as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north, and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim it self reached not those tribes.

Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot.

1. That there was great communication between this tribe, and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining to Manasseh, ver. 8. there were likewise many cities of Ephraim, that lay within the border of Manasseh, ver. 9. of which before, chap. xvi. 9.

2. That Manasseh likewise had cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher, ver. 11. God so ordering it, that tho' each tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence between the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those, who, tho' different tribes, were all one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren.

3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conniving at them, for they made them tributaries, ver. 12, 13. The Ephraimites had done the same, chap. xvi. 10. and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and with their example excused themselves in it.

The most remarkable person of this half tribe in after-time, was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of Abiezer, Caesarea was in this lot, and Antipatris famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

14. And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto? 15. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood-country, and cut down for thy self there in the land of the Perizzites, and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. 16. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. 17. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only. 18. But the mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood: and thou shalt cut it down: and the out-goings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.

Here, 1. The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it doth not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was

was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular favour shewed them, and should not be confined to the decision of the lot so closely as the other tribes; but Joshua makes them know, that in the discharge of his office, as a publick person, he had no more regard to his own tribe than to any other, but would administer impartially, without favour or affection; wherein he has left an excellent example to all in publick trusts. It was a very competent provision that was made for them, as much, for ought appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but one lot, as if that which was assigned to them both was scarce sufficient for one. The word for complainers (*Jude 16.*) is *μεμψιμοιστοι*, blamers of their lot, like the children of Joseph, who would have that altered, the disposal whereof is from the Lord. Two things they suggest to enforce their petition for an augmentation of their lot. (1.) That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them, *ver. 14. I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me*; and we have reason to hope that he that hath sent mouths, will send meat. *I am a great people*, and in so small a lot shall not have room to thrive: Yet, observe, when they speak thankfully of their present increase, they do not speak confidently of the continuance of it; the Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future. The uncertainty of what may be, must not make us unthankful for what has been, and is done in kindness to us. (2.) That a good part of that country which was now fallen to their lot, was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle *chariots of iron*, *ver. 16. i. e.* chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn. They urge, that tho' they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it, wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly reduced than this was.

2. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot, he owns they were a *great people*, and being two tribes, ought to have more than *one lot only*, *ver. 17.* but tells them, that what was fallen to their share would be a sufficient lot for them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury, no, saith Joshua, you must not count upon that, *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*, is a sentence in force, even in Canaan it self. He retorts their own argument, that they were a *great people*, if so, you are the better able to help your selves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn, and then eat.

1. He bids them *work for more*, *ver. 15. Get thee up to the wood-country*, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set on work to cut down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground. Note, Many wish for larger possessions, who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have, think they should have more talents given them, who do not trade with those with which they are intrusted. Most peoples poverty is the effect of their idleness; would they dig, they need not beg.

2. He bids them *fight for more*, *ver. 17, 18.* when they pleaded that they could not come at the wood-lands he spoke of, because in the valley between them and it, there were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the lists with: Never fear them (saith Joshua) thou hast God on thy side, and *thou shalt drive out the Canaanites*, if thou wilt set about it in good earnest, *tho' they have iron chariots*. We straiten our selves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement, greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution?

C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. The setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh, *ver. 1.* 2. The stirring up of the seven tribes that were yet unsettled, to look after their lot, and the putting of them in a method for it, by Joshua, *ver. 2—7.* 3. The distributing of the land into seven lots, by certain men employed for that purpose, *ver. 8, 9.* 4. The determining of these seven portions to the seven tribes yet unprovided for by lot, *ver. 10.* 5. The particular lot of the tribe of Benjamin, the borders of it, *ver. 11—20.* And the cities contained in it, *ver. 21—28.* The other six tribes we shall find well provided for in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there, and the land was subdued before them.

In the midst of the story of the dividing of the land, comes in this account of the setting up of the tabernacle, which had hitherto continued in its old place in the center of their camp, but now three of the four squadrons that used to surround it in the wilderness were broken and diminished, those of Judah, Ephraim, and

Reuben, by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions, and that of Dan only remained entire; it was time to think of removing the tabernacle, it self into a city. Many a time the priests and Levites had taken it down, carried it, and set it up again in the wilderness, according to the directions given them, *Numb. iv. 5, &c.* but now they must do it for good and all, not one of the stakes thereof must any more be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken, *Isa. xxxiii. 20.* Observe,

1. The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was Shiloh, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless, God himself did some way or other direct them to this place; for he had promised to *choose the place* where he would make his name to dwell, *Deut. xii. 11.* It is most probable, God made known his mind in this matter by the judgment of Urim. This place was pitched upon, 1. Because it was in the heart of the country, nearer the center than Jerusalem was, and therefore the more convenient for the meeting of all Israel there from the several parts of the country; it had been in the midst of their camp in the wilderness, and therefore must now be in the midst of their nation, as that which sanctified the whole, and was *the glory in the midst of them*. See *Psal. xlv. 5.* 2. Because it was in the lot of that tribe of which Joshua was, who was now their chief magistrate, and it would be both for his honour and convenience, and for the advantage of the country to have it near him. The testimony of Israel, and the thrones of judgment do well together, *Psal. cxxii. 4, 5.* 3. Some think there was an eye to the name of the place, Shiloh being the name by which the Messiah was known, in dying Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10.* which prophecy, no doubt, was well known among the Jews, the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh, gave them a hint, that in that Shiloh, whom Jacob spoke of, all the ordinances of this worldly sanctuary should have their accomplishment, in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, *Heb. ix. 1, 11.* And Dr Lightfoot thinks that the place where the tabernacle was set up, was therefore called Shiloh, because of the peaceableness of the land at this time; as afterwards in Salem was his temple, which also signifies peaceable.

2. The solemn manner of doing it. *The whole congregation assembled together* to attend the solemnity, to do honour to the ark of God, as the token of his presence, and to bid it welcome to its settlement. Every Israelite was interested in it, and therefore all testified their joy and satisfaction upon this occasion. See *2 Sam. vi. 15.* It is probable, those tribes that were yet encamped when the tabernacle was removed to Shiloh, decamped from Gilgal, and pitched about Shiloh, for every true Israelite will desire to fix there where God's tabernacle fixeth. Mention is made on this occasion of the lands being subdued before them, to intimate, that the country, hereabouts at least, being thoroughly reduced, they met with no opposition, nor were they apprehensive of any danger, but thought it time to make this grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in the constant series of successes, with which he had blessed them. It was a good preface of a comfortable settlement to themselves in Canaan, when their first care was to see the ark well settled, as soon as they had a safe place ready to settle it in. Here the ark continued about three hundred twenty-five years, till the sin of Eli's house forfeited the ark, lost it, and ruined Shiloh, and its ruins were long after made use of as warnings to Jerusalem, *Go, see what I did to Shiloh*, *Jer. vii. 12.* *Psal. lxxviii. 60.*

2. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

3. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you? 4. Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them, and they shall come again to me. 5. And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north. 6. Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7. But the Levites have no part among you, for the the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them. 8. ¶ And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go, and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh. 9. And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh. 10. ¶ And Joshua

Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel, according to their divisions.

Here, 1. Joshua reproves those tribes who were yet unsettled, that they did not bestir themselves to gain a settlement in the land which God had given them. Seven tribes were yet unprovided for, tho' sure of an inheritance, yet uncertain where it should be, and it seems in no great care about it, *ver. 2.* And with them Joshua reasoneth, *ver. 3.* *How long are ye slack?* (1.) They were too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, the more the merrier, and like the Babel-builders, had no mind to be scattered abroad, and break good company. The spoils of the cities they had taken, served them to live plentifully upon for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. Perhaps, the tribes of Judah and Joseph, who had already received their inheritance in the country next adjoining, were generous in entertaining their brethren, who were yet unprovided for, so that they went from one good house to another among their friends, with which, instead of grudging that they were postponed, they were so well pleased, that they cared not for going to houses of their own. (2.) They were slothful and dilatory, it may be they wished the thing done, but had not spirit to stir in it, or move towards the doing of it, tho' it was so much for their own advantage; like the sluggard, that *hides his hand in his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again.* The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places, and this will not be done without care and pains, and breaking through some hardships; thus, *He that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap,* Eccl. xi. 4. Note, Many are diverted from real duties, and debarred from real comforts by seeming difficulties. God by his grace has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are *slack to take possession,* we enter not into that rest as we might by faith, and hope, and holy joy, we live not in heaven, as we might, by setting our affections on things above, and having our conversation there. How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and *forsake our own mercies* for lying vanities? Joshua was sensible of the inconveniencies of this delay, that while they neglected to take possession of the land that was conquered, the Canaanites were recovering strength and spirit, and fortifying themselves in the places that were yet in their hands, which would make the total expulsion of them the more difficult. They would lose their advantages by not following their blow, and therefore *as an eagle stirreth up her nest,* so Joshua stirs them up to take possession of their lot. He is ready to do his part, if they will but do theirs.

2. He puts them in a way to settle themselves. 1. The land that remained must be surveyed, an account taken of the cities, and the territories belonging to them, *ver. 4.* These must be divided into seven equal parts, as near as they could guess at their true value, which they must have an eye to, and not only to the number of the cities, and extent of the country. Judah is fixed on the south, and Joseph on the north of Shiloh, to protect the tabernacle, *ver. 5.* and therefore they need not describe their country, but those countries only that were yet undisposed of. He gives a reason, *ver. 7.* why they must divide it into seven parts only, because the Levites were to have no temporal estate (as we say) but their benefices only which were entailed upon their families, *The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance,* and a very honourable, comfortable, plentiful inheritance it was. Gad and Reuben, with half of the tribe of Manasseh were already fixed, and needed not to have any further care taken of them. Now, (1.) The surveyors were three men out of each of the seven tribes that were to be provided for, *ver. 4.* one and twenty in all, who, perhaps for greater expedition, because they had already lost time, divided themselves into three companies, one of each tribe in each company, and took each their district to survey. The matter was thus referred equally, that there might be neither any partiality used in making up the seven lots, nor any umbrage of suspicion given, but all might be satisfied that they had right done them. (2.) The survey was accordingly made, and brought into Joshua, *ver. 8, 9.* Josephus saith it was seven months in the doing. And we must in it observe, 1. The faith and courage of the persons employed, abundance of Canaanites remained in the land, and all raging against Israel *as a bear robbed of her whelps,* the business of these surveyors would soon be known, and what could they expect but to be way-laid, and have their brains knocked out by the rapparees. But in obedience to Joshua's command, and in dependence upon God's power, they thus put their lives in their hands to serve their country. 2. The good providence of God in protecting them from the many deaths they were exposed to, and bringing them all safe again to the host at Shiloh. When we are in the way of our duty, we are under the special protection of the Almighty.

2. When it was surveyed, and reduced to seven lots, then Joshua would, by appeal to God, and direction from him, determine

which of these lots should belong to each tribe, *ver. 6.* *That I may cast lots for you here* at the tabernacle (because it was a sacred transaction) *before the Lord our God,* to whom each tribe must have an eye with thankfulness for the conveniencies, and submission to the inconveniencies of their allotment. What we have in the world we must acknowledge God's property in, and dispose of it as before him, with justice and charity, and dependence upon providence. The heavenly Canaan is described to us in a book, the book of the scriptures, and there is in it mansions and portions sufficient for all God's spiritual-Israel; Christ is our Joshua that divides it to us, on him we must attend, and to him we must apply our selves, for an inheritance with the saints in light. See *John xvii. 2, 3.*

11. ¶ And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah, and the children of Joseph. 12. And their border on the north-side was from Jordan, and the border went up to the side of Jericho, on the north-side, and went up through the mountains west-ward, and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13. And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, (which is Beth-el) southward, and the border descended to Ataroth-adar, near the hill that lieth on the south-side of the nether Beth-horon. 14. And the border was drawn thence, and compassed the corner of the sea south-ward, from the hill that lieth before Beth-horon south-ward: and the goings out thereof were at Kirjath baal (which is Kirjath-jearim) a city of the children of Judah: This was the west quarter. 15. And the south-quarter was from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah. 16. And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel, 17. And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, and went forth toward Geliloth, which is over-against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, 18. And passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah. 19. And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah northward: and the out-goings of the border were at the north-bay of the salt-sea at the south-end of Jordan: this was the south-coast. 20. And Jordan was the border of it on the east-side. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families. 21. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families, were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz, 22. And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el, 23. And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah, 24. And Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba: twelve cities with their villages. 25. Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth, 26. And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah, 27. And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah, 28. And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, (which is Jerusalem) Gibeath, and Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to their families.

We have here the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, which providence cast next to Joseph on the one hand, because Benjamin was own and only brother to Joseph, and was little Benjamin, *Psal. lxxviii. 27.* that needed the protection of great Joseph and yet had a better protector, for *the Lord shall cover him all the day long,* Deut. xxxiii. 22. And next to Judah, on the other hand, that this tribe might hereafter unite with Judah in an adherence to the throne of David, and the temple at Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The exact borders and limits of this tribe, which we need not be exact in the explication of; as it had Judah on the south, and Joseph on the north, so it had Jordan on the east, and Dan on the west. The western border is said to *compass the corners of the seas southward,* *ver. 14.* whereas no part of the lot of this tribe came near to the great sea, bishop Patrick thinks the meaning is, that it ran along in a parallel line to the great sea, tho' at a distance. Dr Fuller suggests, that since it is not called the great sea, but only the sea, which often signifies any lake or mere, it may be meant of the pool of Gibeon, which may be called a corner or canton of a sea, it is called the *great waters in Gibeon,* Jer. xli. 12. and it is compassed by the western border of this tribe.

2. The particular cities in this tribe, not all, but the most considerable, twenty-six are here named, Jericho is put first, tho' dismantled, and forbidden to be rebuilt as a city with gates and walls, because it might be built and inhabited as a country village, and so was not useless to this tribe. Gilgal was in this tribe, where Israel first encamped when Saul was made king, 1 Sam. xi. 14. It was afterwards a very profane place, *Hof. ix. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal.* Beth-el was in this tribe, a famous place; tho' Benjamin adhered to the house of David, yet Beth-el it seems was in the possession of the house of Joseph, *Judg. i. 25.* and there Jeroboam set up one of his calves. Gibeon was in this tribe, where the altar was in the beginning of Solomon's time, 2 Chron. i. 3. Gibeah likewise, that infamous place where the Levite's concubine was abused. Mizpeh, and near it Samuel's Ebenezer; Anathoth also Jeremiah's city, were in this tribe, as was the northern part of Jerusalem. Paul was the honour of this tribe, *Rom. xi. 1. Phil. iii. 5.* but where his land lay we know not, he fought the better country.

C H A P. XIX.

In the description of the lots of Judah and Benjamin, we have an account both of the borders that surrounded them, and of the cities contained in them. In that of Ephraim and Manasseh we have the borders, but not the cities; in this chapter Simeon and Dan are described by their cities only, and not their borders, because they lay very much within Judah, especially the former; the rest have both their borders described, and their cities named, especially frontiers. Here is, (1.) The lot of Simeon, ver. 1—9. (2.) Of Zebulun, ver. 10—16. (3.) Of Issachar, ver. 17—23. (4.) Of Asher, ver. 24—31. (5.) Of Naphtali, ver. 32—39. (6.) Of Dan, ver. 40—48. Lastly, The inheritance assigned to Joshua himself, and his own family, ver. 49—51.

1. **A**ND the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. 2. And they had in their inheritance Beersheba, and Sheba, and Moladah, 3. And Hazar-shual, and Belah, and Azem, 4. And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah, 5. And Ziklag, and Beth-markaboth, and Hafarsufah, 6. And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhin: thirteen cities and their villages. 7. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ahan: four cities and their villages. 8. And all the villages that were round about these cities, to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. 9. Out of the portion of the children of Judah, was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

Simeon's lot was drawn after Judah's, Joseph's, and Benjamin's, because Jacob had put that tribe under disgrace, yet it is put before the two younger sons of Leah, and the three sons of the handmaids. Not one person of note, either judge or prophet, was of the tribe, that we know of.

1. The situation of their lot was within that of Judah, *ver. 1.* and was taken from it, *ver. 9.* It seems they that first surveyed the land, thought it bigger than it was, and that it would have held out, to give every tribe in proportion as large a share as they had carved out for Judah; but upon a more strict enquiry it was found that it would not reach, *ver. 9. the part of the children of Judah was too much for them,* more, than they needed, and more as it proved, than fell to their share. Yet God did not by the lot lessen it, but left it to their prudence and care afterwards to discover and rectify the mistake, which when they did, (1.) The men of Judah did not oppose the taking away of the cities again, which by the first distribution fell within their border, when they were convinced that they had more than their proportion. In all such cases errors must be excepted, and a review admitted if there be occasion. Tho' in strictness what fell to their lot was their right against all the world, yet they would not insist upon it, when it appeared that another tribe would want what they had to spare. Note, We must look on the things of others, and not on our own only. The abundance of some must supply the wants of others, that there may be something of an equality, for which there may be equity where there is not law. (2.) That which was thus taken off from Judah to be put into a new lot, providence directed to the tribe of Simeon, that Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe might be fulfilled, *I will divide them in Jacob.* The cities of Simeon were scattered in Judah, with which tribe they were surrounded on either side but the sea. This brought them into a confederacy with the tribe of Judah, *Judg. i. 3.* and afterwards was a happy occasion of the adherence of many of this tribe to the house of David, at the time of the re-

volt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xv. 9. *out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance.* It is good being in a good neighbourhood.

2. The cities within their lot are here named. Beersheba, or Sheba, for they seem to be the same place, is put first, Ziklag is one of them which we read of in David's story. What course they took to enlarge their borders, and make room for themselves we find, 1 Chron. iv. 39, &c.

10. ¶ And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun, according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid. 11. And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam, 12. And turned from Sarid east-ward, toward the sun-rising, unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia, 13. And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah. 14. And the border compasseth it on the north-side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el. 15. And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages. 16. This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

This is the lot of Zebulun, who tho' born of Leah after Issachar, yet was blessed by Jacob and Moses before him, and therefore it was so ordered, that his lot was drawn before that of Issachar's, north of which it lay, and south of Asher.

1. The lot of this tribe was washed by the great sea on the west, and by the sea of Tiberias on the east, answering Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 13. Zebulun shall be a haven of ships,* trading ships on the great sea, and fishing ships on the sea of Galilee.

2. Tho' there were some places in this tribe which were made famous in the Old Testament, especially mount Carmel, on which the famous trial was between God and Baal in Elijah's time, yet it was made much more illustrious in the New Testament, for within the lot of this tribe was Nazareth, where our blessed Saviour spent so much of his time on earth, and from which he was called *Jesus of Nazareth*, and mount Tabor on which he was transfigured, and that coast of the sea of Galilee on which Christ preached so many sermons, and wrought so many miracles.

17. ¶ And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar, according to their families. 18. And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem, 19. And Hapharaim, and Shihon, and Anaharath, 20. And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abetz, 21. And Remeth, and En-gannim, and En-haddah, and Bethpazzez. 22. And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Beth-shemesh, and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. 23. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families: the cities and their villages.

The lot of Issachar ran from Jordan in the east, to the great sea in the west, and Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. A numerous tribe, *Numb. xxvi. 25.* Tola, one of the judges, was of this tribe, *Judg. x. 1.* So was Baasha, one of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings xv. 27. The most considerable places in this tribe were, 1. Jezreel, in which was Ahab's palace, and near it Naboth's vineyard. 2. Shunem, where lived the good Shunamite that entertained Elisha. 3. The river of Kishon, on the banks of which, in this tribe, Sisera was beaten by Deborah and Barak. 4. The mountains of Gilboa, on which Saul and Jonathan were slain, which were not far from Endor, where Saul consulted the witch. 5. The valley of Megiddo, where Josiah was slain near Hadad-rimmon. 2 Kings xxiii. 29. *Zech. xii. 11.*

24. ¶ And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher, according to their families. 25. And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph, 26. And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-libnath, 27. And turneth toward the sun-rising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el toward the north-side of Bethemek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand, 28. And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon: and Kanah, even unto great Zidon: 29. And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre, and

and the coast turneth to Hofah: and the out-goings thereof are at the sea, from the coast to Achzib. 30. Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages. 31. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The lot of Asher lay upon the coast of the great sea; we read not of any famous person of this tribe, but Anna the prophetess who was a constant resident in the temple, at the time of our Saviour's birth, *Luke ii. 36.* Nor were there many famous places in this tribe. Aphek, mentioned *ver. 30.* was the place near which Benhadad was beaten by Ahab, *1 Kings xx. 30.* But close adjoining to this tribe were the celebrated sea-port towns of Tyre and Sidon, which we read so much of. Tyre is called here that strong city, *ver. 29.* but bishop Patrick thinks it was not the same Tyre which we read of afterwards, for that was built on an island; this old strong city, on the continent. And it is conjectured by some, that into these two strong holds, Sidon and Tzor, or Tyre, many of the people of Canaan fled, and took shelter when Joshua invaded them.

32. ¶ The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali: *even* for the children of Naphtali according to their families. 33. And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaanannim, and Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel unto Lakum: and the out-goings thereof were at Jordan. 34. And *then* the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south-side, and reacheth to Asher on the west-side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sun-rising. 35. And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Cinnereth, 36. And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor, 37. And Kedesh, and Edrei, and En-hazor, 38. And Iron and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-she mesh: nineteen cities with their villages. 39. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, according to their families, the cities and their villages.

Naphtali lay farthest north of all the tribes, bordering on mount Libanus. The city of Leshem, or Laish, lay on the utmost edge of it to the north, and therefore when the Danites had made themselves masters of it, and called it Dan, the length of Canaan from north to south was reckoned from Dan to Beersheba. It had Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah upon Jordan, probably a city of that name, and so distinguished from the tribe of Judah on the east. It was in the lot of this tribe, near the waters of Merom, that Joshua fought and routed Jabin, *chap. xi. 1, &c.* In this tribe stood Capernaum and Bethsaida, on the north end of the sea of Tiberias, in which Christ did so many mighty works; and the mountain (as is supposed) on which Christ preached, *Mat. v. 1.*

40. ¶ And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families: 41. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-she mesh, 42. And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah, 43. And Elon, and Thimmathah, and Ekron, 44. And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath, 45. And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon, 46. And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho. 47. And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. 48. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families, these cities with their villages.

Dan, tho' commander of one of the four squadrons of the camp of Israel, in the wilderness, that which brought up the rear, yet was last provided for in Canaan, and his lot fell in the southern part of Canaan, between Judah on the east, and the land of the Philistines on the west; Ephraim on the north and Simeon on the south. Providence ordered this numerous and puissant tribe into a post of danger, as best able to deal with those vexatious neighbours the Philistines, and so it was found in Samson.

Here is, 1. An account of what fell to this tribe by lot, Zorah and Eshtaol and the camp of Dan thereabouts, we read of in the story of Samson. And near there was the valley of Eschol, whence the spies brought the famous bunch of grapes: Japho, or Joppa, was in this lot.

2. An account of what they got by their own industry and valour, which is mentioned here, *ver. 47.* But related at large, *Judg. xviii. 7; &c.*

49. ¶ When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them: 50. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, *even* Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein. 51. These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun; and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot, in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: so they made an end of dividing the country.

Before this account of the dividing of the land is solemnly closed up, in the last verse, which intimates that the thing was done to the satisfaction of all, here is account of the particular inheritance assigned to Joshua.

1. He was last served, tho' the eldest and greatest man of all Israel, and who having commanded in the conquest of Canaan, might have demanded the first settlement in it for himself and his family. But he would make it to appear that in all he did he sought the good of his country, and not any private interest of his own. He was content to be unfixed till he saw them all pleased, and herein is a great example to all in publick places to prefer the common welfare before their particular satisfaction. Let the publick first be served.

2. He had his lot according unto the word of the Lord; it is probable, when God, by Moses, told Caleb what inheritance he should have, *Josh. xiv. 9.* he gave the like promise to Joshua, which he had an eye to in making his election, which made his portion doubly pleasant, that he had it, not as the rest, by common providence, but by special promise.

3. He chose it in mount Ephraim, which belonged to his own tribe, with which he thereby put himself in common, when he might by prerogative have chosen his inheritance in some other tribe, as suppose that of Judah, and thereby have distinguished himself from them. Let no man's preferment or honour make him ashamed of his family or country, or estrange him from it: The tabernacle was set up in the lot of Ephraim, and Joshua would forecast not to be far from that.

4. The children of Israel are said to give it him, *ver. 49.* which speaks his humility, that he would not take it to himself without the peoples consent and approbation, as if he would thereby own himself tho' *major singulis yet minor universis*, and would hold even the estate of his family, under God, by the grant of the people.

5. It was a city that must be built before it was fit to be dwelt in: while others dwelt in houses which they builded not. Joshua must build for himself, that he might be a pattern of industry, and contentment with mean things; such buildings as he could hastily run up, without curiosity or magnificence. Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for us, yet himself not having where to lay his head. Even Christ pleased not himself.

C H A P. XX.

This short chapter is concerning the cities of refuge, which we often read of in the writings of Moses, but this is the last time that we find mention of them, for now that matter was thoroughly settled. Here is, (1) The law God gave concerning them, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) The peoples designation of the particular cities for that use, *ver. 7—9.* And this remedial law was a figure of good things to come.

1. THE LORD also spake unto Joshua saying, 2. Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: 3. That the slayer that killeth any person unawares, and unwittingly, may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. 4. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities, shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city; they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place that he may dwell among them. 5. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand: because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. 6. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until

until the death of the high-priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan, and this among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protecting of those that were guilty of casual murder; which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case; and it was for the interest of the land, that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty, but not his heart, should not be shed, no not by the avenger of blood: of this law God here minds them, which was so much for their advantage, that they might mind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour.

(1.) Orders are given for the appointing of these cities, (*ver.* 2.) and very seasonably at this time when the land was newly surveyed, and so they were the better able to divide the coasts of it into three parts, as God had directed them, in order to the more convenient situation of these cities of refuge, *Deut.* xix. 3. Yet, it is probable, it was not done till after the Levites had their portion assigned them in the next chapter, because the cities of refuge were all to be Levites cities. As soon as ever God had given them cities of rest, he bid them appoint *cities of refuge*, to which they none of them knew but they might be glad to escape. Thus God provided not only for their ease at all times, but for their safety in times of danger, and such times we must expect and prepare for in this world. And it intimates what God's spiritual Israel have and shall have in Christ and heaven, not only rest to repose themselves in, but refuge to secure themselves in. And we cannot think, these cities of refuge should be so often and so much spoken of in the law of Moses and so much care taken about them, when the intention of them might be effectually answered, as it is in our law, by authorizing the courts of judgment to protect and acquit the manslayer in all those cases wherein he was to have privilege of sanctuary, if they were not designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers *flee for refuge*, *Heb.* vi. 18. and *in whom* they are *found*, *Phil.* iii. 9. as in a sanctuary, where they are privileged from arrests, and *there is now no condemnation to them.* *Rom.* viii. 1.

2. Instructions are given for the using of these cities. The laws in this matter we had before, *Numb.* xxxv. 10, &c. where they were opened at large.

1. It is supposed that a man might possibly kill a person, it may be his own child, or dearest friend, unawares and unwittingly, *ver.* 3. not only whom he hated not, but whom he truly loved, before time, *ver.* 5. for *the way of man is not in himself.* What reason have we to thank God who has kept us both from slaying, and from being slain by accident. In this case it is supposed that the relations of the person slain would demand the life of the slayer, in satisfaction to that ancient law, that *whose sheds mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*

2. It is provided, that if upon trial it appeared, that the murder was done purely by accident, and not by design, either upon an old grudge, or a sudden passion, then the slayer should be sheltered from the avenger of blood in any one of these cities, *ver.* 4, 6. By this law he was entitled to a dwelling in that city, was taken into the care of the government of it, but was confined to it, as a prisoner at large; only if he survived the high-priest, then, and not till then, he might return to his own city. And the Jews say, if he died before the high-priest in the city of his refuge and exile, and was buried there, yet at the death of the high-priest his bones should be removed with respect, to the place of his fathers sepulchres.

7. ¶ And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba (which is Hebron) in the mountain of Judah. 8. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho east-ward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain, out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. 9. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares, might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

We have here the nomination of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, which was done by the advice and authority of Joshua and the princes, *ver.* 7. and upon occasion of the mention of this, is repeated the nomination of the other three in the lot of the other two tribes and a half, which was done by Moses, *Deut.* iv. 43. but (as bishop Patrick thinks) they had not the privilege till now.

1. They are said to *sanctify* these cities, that is the original word for *appointed*, *ver.* 7. Not that any ceremony was used, to signify the consecration of them, only they did by a publick act of court, solemnly declare them cities of refuge; and, as such, sacred to the honour of God, as the protector of exposed innocency. If they were sanctuaries, it was proper to say, they were sanctified, Christ, our refuge, was sanctified by his Father, nay, for our sakes, he sanctified himself, *John* xvii. 19.

2. These cities (as those also on the other side Jordan, stood in the three several parts of the country, so conveniently that a man might (they say) in half a day reach some one of them from any corner of the country. Kedesh was in Naphtali, the most northern tribe, Hebron in Judah the most southern, and Shechem in Ephraim, which lay in the middle, about equally distant from the other two. God is a refuge at hand.

3. They were all Levites cities, which put an honour upon God's tribe, making them judges in those cases wherein divine providence was so nearly concerned; and protectors to oppressed innocency; it was also a kindness to the poor refugee, that when he might not go up to the house of the Lord, nor tread his courts, yet he had the servants of God's house with him, to instruct him, and pray for him, and help to make up the want of publick ordinances. If he must be confined, it shall be to a Levite city, where he may if he will improve his time.

4. These cities were upon hills to be seen afar off, for a city on a hill cannot be hid; and this would both direct and encourage the poor distressed man that was making that way; and tho' therefore his way at last was up-hill, yet this would comfort him, that he would be in his place of safety, quickly: and if he could but get into the suburbs of the city, he was well enough.

5. Some observe a significancy in the names of these cities with application to Christ our refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. Kedesh signifies holy, and our refuge is the holy Jesus. Shechem a shoulder, and the government is upon his shoulder. Hebron, fellowship, and believers are called into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. Bezer, a fortification, for he is a strong hold to all them that trust in him. Ramoth, high, or exalted, for him hath God exalted with his own right hand. Golan, joy, or exaltation, for in him all the saints are justified, and shall glory.

Lastly, Besides all these the horns of the altar, wherever it was, were a refuge to those who took hold on them, if the crime were such as that sanctuary was allowed. This is implied in that law, *Exod.* xxi. 14. that a wilful murderer shall be taken from God's altar to be put to death. And we find the altar used for this purpose, *1 Kings* i. 50.—ii. 28. Christ is our altar, who not only *sanctifies the gift*, but protects the giver.

CHAP. XXI.

It had been often said that the tribe of Levi should have no inheritance with their brethren, no particular part of the country assigned them, as the other tribes had, no not the country about Shiloh, which one would have expected should have been appropriated to them as the lands of the church; but tho' they were not thus cast into a country by themselves, it appears, by the provision made for them in this chapter, that they were no losers, but the rest of the tribes were very much gainers by their being dispersed. We have here, 1. The motion they made to have their cities assigned them, according to God's appointment, ver. 1, 2. 2. The nomination of the cities accordingly out of their several tribes, and the distribution of them to their respective families of this tribe, ver. 3—8. 3. A catalogue of the cities, forty-eight in all, ver. 9—42. 4. A receipt in full of all that God had promised to his people Israel, ver. 43—45.

1. **T**HEN came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. 2. And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle. 3. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs. 4. And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, *which were of the Levites*, had by lot, out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities. 5. And the rest of the children of Kohath *had* by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities. 6. And the children of Gershon *had* by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 7. The children of Merari by their

their families; *bad* out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 8. And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Here is, 1. The Levites petition presented to this general convention of the states, now sitting at Shiloh, *ver.* 1, 2. Observe,

1. They had not their lot assigned them, till they made their claim. There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, that royal priesthood, but then they must petition for it, *ask and it shall be given you.* Joshua had quickened the rest of the tribes who were slack, to put in their claims, but the Levites may be supposed to know their duty and interest better than the rest, and were therefore forward in this matter, when it came to their turn, without being called upon. They build their claim upon a very good foundation, not their own merits or services, but the divine precept, *the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities,* commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them. Note, The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please, no, as the God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so hath the Lord Jesus, the king of the Christian church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance it is, that *they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel,* (1 Cor. ix. 14.) and should live comfortably.

2. They did not make their claim till all *the rest of the tribes were provided for*, and then they did it immediately. There was something of reason for it, every tribe must first know their own, else they would not know what they gave the Levites, and so it could not be such a reasonable service as it ought to be. But it is also an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience, (and Levites should be examples of these, and other virtues) that they were willing to be served last, and they feared never the worse for it. Let not God's ministers complain, if at any time they find themselves postponed in men's thoughts and cares, but let them make sure the favour of God, and the honour that comes from him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men.

2. The Levites petition granted immediately, without any dispute, the princes of Israel being perhaps ashamed that they needed to be called upon in this matter, and that the motion had not been made among themselves for the settling of the Levites.

1. The children of Israel are said to give the cities for the Levites. God had appointed how many they should be in all, forty-eight. It is probable, Joshua, and the princes, upon consideration of the extent and value of the lot of each tribe as it was laid before them, had appointed how many cities should be taken out of each; and then the fathers of the several tribes themselves agreed which they should be, and therefore are said to give them, as an offering, to the Lord; so God had appointed, *Numb. xxxv. 8. Every one shall give of his cities to the Levites.* Here God tried their generosity, and it was found to praise and honour, for it appears by the following catalogue, that the cities they gave to the Levites were generally some of the best, and most considerable in each tribe. And it is probable, they had an eye to the situation of them, taking care they should be so dispersed, as that no part of the country should be too far distant from a Levites city.

2. They gave them at the commandment of the Lord, *i. e.* with an eye to the command, and in obedience to it, which was it that sanctified the grant. They gave the number that God commanded, and it was well that matter was settled, that the Levites might not ask more, nor the Israelites offer less. They gave them also with their suburbs, or glebe-lands, belonging to them, so many cubits by measure from the walls of the city, as God had commanded, *Numb. xxxv. 4, 5.* and did not go about to cut them short.

3. When the forty-eight cities were pitched upon, they were divided into four lots, as they lay next together, and then by lot were determined to the four several families of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites had surrendered the cities into the hand of God, he would himself have the distributing of them among his servants. 1. The family of Aaron, who were the only priests, had to their share the thirteen cities that were given by the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin, *ver. 4.* God in wisdom ordered it thus, that tho' Jerusalem itself was none of their cities, it being as yet in the possession of the Jebusites, and these generous tribes would not mock the Levites, who had another warfare to mind, with a city that must be recovered by the sword before it could be enjoyed, yet the cities that fell to their lot were those which lay next to Jerusalem, because that was to be in process of time the holy city, where their business would chiefly lie.

2. The Kohathite Levites (among whom were the posterity of Moses, tho' never distinguished from them) had the cities that lay in the lot of Dan (which lay next to Judah) and in that of Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (that lay next to Benjamin). So they who descended from Aaron's father joined nearest to Aaron's sons. 3. Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and therefore tho' the younger house of the Kohathites was preferred before his, yet his children had the precedency of the other family

No. XVII.

of Merari, *ver. 6.* 4. The Merarites, the youngest house, had their lot last, and it lay furthest off, *ver. 7.* The rest of the sons of Jacob had a lot for every tribe only, but Levi, God's tribe, had a lot for each of its families, for there is a particular providence directing and attending the removes and settlements of ministers, and appointing where they shall fix who are to be the lights of the world.

9. ¶ And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are *here* mentioned by name, 10. Which the children of Aaron, *being* of the families of the Kohathites, *who were* of the children of Levi, had: (for theirs was the first lot) 11. And they gave them the city of Arba, the father of Anak (which city is Hebron) in the hill-country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it. 12. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, for his possession. 13. ¶ Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest, Hebron with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer, and Libnah with her suburbs, 14. And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs, 15. And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs, 16. And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: nine cities out of those two tribes. 17. And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs, 18. Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs: four cities. 19. All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs. 20. ¶ And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot, out of the tribe of Ephraim. 21. For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs, 22. And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs: four cities. 23. And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs, 24. Aijalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: four cities. 25. And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: two cities. 26. All the cities *were* ten with their suburbs, for the families of the children of Kohath that remained. 27. ¶ And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the *other* half-tribe of Manasseh, *they gave* Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer: and Beeshterah with her suburbs: two cities. 28. And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs, 29. Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs: four cities. 30. And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs, 31. Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: four cities. 32. And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer: and Hammothdor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs: three cities. 33. All the cities of the Gershonites, according to their families, *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs. 34. ¶ And unto the families of the children of Merari the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs, 35. Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs: four cities. 36. And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs, 37. Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: four cities. 38. And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer: and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 39. Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazor with her suburbs: four cities in all. 40. So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were by their lot, twelve cities. 41. All the cities of the Levites, within the possession of the children of Israel, *were* forty and eight cities with their suburbs. 42. These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus *were* all these cities.

We have here a particular account of the cities which were given to the children of Levi, out of the several tribes, not only to be occupied and inhabited by them, as tenants to the several tribes in which they lay; no, their interest in them was not dependent and precarious, but to be owned and possessed by them as lords and proprietors, and as having the same title to them that the rest of the tribes had to their cities or lands; as appears by the law which preserved the houses in the Levites cities from being alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, *Lev. xxv. 32, 33*. Yet it is probable, that the Levites having only the cities and suburbs, while the land about pertained to the tribes in which they lay, those of that tribe for the convenience of occupying that land, might commonly rent houses of the Levites, as they could spare them in their cities, and so live among them as their tenants.

Several things may be observed in this account, besides what was observed in the law concerning it, *Numb. xxxv.*

1. That the Levites were dispersed into all the tribes, and not suffered to live all together in any one part of the country, this would find them all with work, and employ them all for the good of others, for ministers of all people, must neither be idle, nor live to themselves, or to one another only. Christ left his twelve disciples together in a body, but left orders that they should in due time disperse themselves, that they might *preach the gospel to every creature*. The mixing of the Levites thus with the other tribes, would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, and as became their sacred function, and to avoid every thing that might disgrace it; had they lived all together, they would have been tempted to wink at one another's faults, and to excuse one another when they did amiss, but by this means they were made to see the eyes of all Israel upon them, and therefore saw it their concern to walk so as that their ministry might in nothing be blamed, nor their high character suffer by their ill carriage.

2. That every tribe of Israel was adorned and enriched with its share of Levites cities, in proportion to its compass, even those that lay most remote. They were all God's people, and therefore they had all Levites among them, 1. To shew kindness to as God appointed them, *Deut. xii. 19.—xiv. 29*. They were God's receivers, to whom the people might give their grateful acknowledgments of God's goodness, as the occasion and disposition was. 2. To receive advice and instruction from; when they could not go up to the tabernacle to consult those who attended there, they might go to a Levites city, and be taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Thus God set up a candle in every room of his house, to give light to all his family; as those that attended the altar *kept the charge of the Lord*, to see that no divine appointment was neglected there, so they that were scattered in the country had their charge too, which was to see that no idolatrous, superstitious, usages were introduced at a distance, and to *watch for the souls* of God's Israel. Thus did God graciously provide for the keeping up of religion among them, and that they might have the word nigh them; yet, blessed be God, we under the gospel have it yet nigher, not only Levites in every country, but Levites in every parish, whose office it is still to teach the people knowledge, and to go before them in the things of God.

3. That here were thirteen cities, and those some of the best, appointed for the priests, the sons of Aaron, *ver. 19*. Aaron left but two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, yet his family was now so well increased, and it was foreseen, that it would in process of time grow so numerous, as to replenish all these cities; tho' a considerable number, must of necessity be resident wherever the ark and the altar were. We read in both Testaments of such numbers of priests, that we may suppose none of all the families of Israel that came out of Egypt increased afterwards so much as that of Aaron did, and the promise afterwards to the house of Aaron, is, *God shall increase you more and more, you and your children*, *Psal. cxv. 12, 14*. He will raise up a seed to serve him.

4. That some of the Levites cities were afterwards famous upon other accounts. Hebron was the city in which David began his reign, and in Mahanaim another Levites city, *ver. 38*. he lay, and had his head quarters when he fled from Absalom. The first Israelite that ever wore the title of king, *viz.* Abimelech, the son of Gideon, reigned in Shechem, another Levites city, *ver. 21*.

5. That the number of them in all was more than of most of the tribes, except Judah, tho' the tribe of Levi was one of the least of the tribes; to shew how liberal God is, and his people should be, to his ministers, yet the disproportion will not appear so great, as at first it seems, if we consider that the Levites had cities only with the suburbs to dwell in, but the rest of the tribes, besides their cities (and those perhaps were many more than are named in the account of their lot) had many unwall'd towns and villages which they inhabited, besides country houses.

Upon the whole, it appears, that effectual care was taken, that the Levites should live both comfortably and usefully; and those, whether ministers, or others, for whom providence has done well, must look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do good, and, according as their capacity and opportunity is, to serve their generation.

43 ¶ And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they

possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44. And the LORD gave them rest round about according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter, the foregoing history summed up, and, to make it appear the more bright, compared with the promise, of which it was the full accomplishment. God's word and his works mutually illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true, and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.

1. God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and now at last he performed that promise, *ver. 43*. they *possessed it, and dwelt therein*. Tho' they had often forfeited the benefit of that promise, and God had long delayed the performance of it, yet at last all difficulties were conquered, and Canaan was their own. And the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God's spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of him that cannot lie.

2. God had promised to give them rest in that land, and now they had rest round about. Rest from the fatigues of their travel through the wilderness, which tedious march, perhaps, was long in their bones; rest from their wars in Canaan, and the insults which their enemies there had at first made upon them. They now dwelt, not only in habitations of their own, but those quiet and peaceable ones; tho' there were Canaanites that remained, yet none that had either strength or spirit to attack them, or so much as give them an alarm. This rest continued, till they, by their own sin and folly put thorns into their own beds, their own eyes.

3. God had promised to give them victory and success in their wars, and this promise likewise was fulfilled, *there stood not a man before them*, *ver. 44*. They had the better in every battle, and which way soever they turned their forces they prospered. It is true, there were Canaanites now remaining in many parts of the land, and such as afterwards made head against them, and became very formidable. But, (1.) As to the present remains of the Canaanites, they were no contradiction to the promise, for God had said he would not drive them out all at once, but *by little and little*, *Exod. xxiii. 30*. They had now as much in their full possession as they had occasion for, and as they had hands to manage; so that the Canaanites only kept possession of some of the less cultivated parts of the country against the beasts of the field, till Israel, in process of time, should become numerous enough to replenish them. (2.) As to the after-prevalency of the Canaanites, that was purely the effect of Israel's cowardise and slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries, and other abominations of the heathen, which the Lord would have cast out before them, but that they harboured and indulged them.

So that the foundation of God stands sure, Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and is an acquittance under their hands to the honour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so oft distrusted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world, *there failed not any good thing*, no, nor ought of any good thing (so fully is it expressed) *which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel*, but in due time *all came to pass*, *ver. 45*. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua, in the name of all Israel, we afterwards find made by Solomon, and all Israel did in effect say Amen to it, *1 Kings viii. 56*. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, is what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and if in any thing it has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

CHAP. XXII.

Many particular things we have read concerning the two tribes and a half, though nothing separated them from the rest of the tribes, but only the river Jordan, and this chapter is wholly concerning them. (1.) Joshua's dismissal of the militia of those tribes from the camp of Israel, in which they had served as auxiliaries, during all the wars of Canaan, and their return thereupon to their own country, *ver. 1—9*. (2.) The altar they built on the borders of Jordan, in token of their communion with the land of Israel, *ver. 10*. (3.) The offence which the rest of the tribes took at this altar, and the message they sent them thereupon, *ver. 11—20*. (4.) The apology which the two tribes and a half made for what they had done, *ver. 21—29*. (5.) The satisfaction which their apology gave to the rest of the tribes, *ver. 30—34*. And (which is strange) whereas in most differences that happen, there is a fault on both sides, on this there was fault on no side; none (for ought appears) were to be blamed, but all to be praised.

1. THEN

1. **T**HEN Joshua called the Reubenites; and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2. And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. 3. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4. And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get ye unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. 5. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul. 6. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. 7. ¶ Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them, 8. And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brags, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. 9. ¶ And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

The war being ended, and ended gloriously, Joshua, as a prudent general, disbands his army, who never designed to make war their trade, and sends them home to enjoy what they had conquered, and to beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and, particularly, the forces of these separate tribes, who had received their inheritance on the other side Jordan from Moses upon this condition, that their men of war should assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, which they promised to do, *Numb. xxxii. 32.* and renewed the promise to Joshua at the opening the campaign, *Josh. i. 16.* And now they had performed their bargain, Joshua publicly, and solemnly in Shiloh gives them their discharge. Whether this was done as it was placed, not till after the land was divided, as some think, or whether after the war was ended, and before the division was made, as others think, because there was no need of their assistance in dividing the land, but only in conquering it, nor were there any of their tribes employed as commissioners in that affair, but only of the other ten, *Numb. xxxiv. 18, &c.* this is certain, it was not done till after Shiloh was made the head quarters, *ver. 8.* and the land was begun to be divided before they removed from Gilgal, *chap. xiv. 6.*

It is probable, this army of Reubenites and Gadites, which had led the van in all the wars of Canaan, had sometimes in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army retired into winter-quarters, some of them at least made a step over Jordan, for it was not far to visit their families, and to look after their private affairs, and perhaps tarried at home, and sent others in their room more serviceable; but still these two tribes and a half had their quota of troops ready, forty thousand in all, which, whenever there was occasion, rendered themselves at their respective posts, and now attended in a body to receive their discharge. Tho' their affection to their families, and concern for their affairs, could not but make them, after so long absence, very desirous to return, yet, like good soldiers, they would not move till they had orders from their general. So tho' our heavenly Father's house above be never so desirable, (it is bishop Hall's allusion) yet must we stay on earth till our warfare be accomplished, wait for a due discharge, and not anticipate the time of our removal.

1. Joshua dismisseth them to the *land of their possession*, *ver. 4.* They that were first in the assignment of their lot, were last in the enjoyment of it; they got the start of their brethren in title, but their brethren were before them in full possession; so the last shall be first, and the first last, that there may be something of equality.

2. He dismisseth them with their pay, for who goes a warfare at his own charge? *ver. 8. Return with much riches unto your tents.* Tho' all the land they had helped to conquer was to go to the other tribes, yet they should have their share of the plun-

der, and had so, and that was all the pay that any of the soldiers expected; for the wars of Canaan bore their own charges. Go (saith Joshua) go home to your tents, *i. e.* your houses, which he calls tents, because they had been so much used to tents in the wilderness, and indeed the strongest, stateliest, houses in this world are to be looked upon but as tents, mean and moveable; in comparison with our house above. Go home with much riches not only cattle, the spoil of the country, but silver and gold; the plunder of the cities, and, (1.) Let your brethren you leave behind have your good word, who have allowed you your share in full, tho' the land is entirely theirs, and have not offered to make any drawback. Do not say that you are losers by us. (2.) Let your brethren you go to, who abode by the stuff, have some share of the spoil. *Divide the spoil with your brethren*, as that was divided which was taken in the war with Midian, *Numb. xxxi. 27.* Let your brethren that have wanted you all this while be the better for you when you come home.

3. He dismisseth them with a very honourable character. Tho' their service was a due debt, and the performance of a promise, and they had done no more than was their duty to do, yet he highly commends them; not only gives them up their bonds (as it were) now they had fulfilled their condition, but applauds their good services. Tho' it was by the favour of God, and his power that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet instruments must not be altogether overlooked. He here commends them, (1.) For the readiness of their obedience to their commanders, *ver. 2.* When Moses was gone, they remembered and observed the charge he had given them; and all the orders which Joshua, as general of the forces, had issued out, they had carefully obeyed, went, and came, and did as he appointed, *Matth. viii. 9.* It is as much as any thing the soldiers praise, to observe the word of command. (2.) For the constancy of their affection, and adherence to their brethren, *you have not left them these many days.* How many days he doth not say, nor can we gather it for certain from any other place. Calvisius, and others of the best Chronologers compute, that the conquering and dividing of the land was the work of about six or seven years, and so long these separate tribes attended their camp, and did them the best service they could: Note, It will be the honour of those that have espoused the cause of God's Israel, and twisted interests with them, to stick to them, and never to leave them till God has given them rest, and then they shall rest with them.

(3.) For the faithfulness of their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Israel, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God, *ye have kept the charge*, or, as the word is, *ye have kept the keeping*, *i. e.* ye have carefully and circumspectly kept the commandment of the Lord your God; not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in general, you have kept up religion in your part of the camp, a rare and excellent thing among soldiers, and where it is worthy to be praised.

4. He dismisseth them with good counsel, not, to cultivate their ground, fortify their cities, and now their hands were enured to war and victory to invade their neighbours, and so enlarge their own territories, but to keep up serious godliness among them in the power of it. They were not politick but pious instructions that he gave them, *ver. 5.* in general, to *take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law.* They that have the commandment have it in vain, unless they do the commandment; and it will not be done aright, so apt are we to turn aside, and so industrious are our spiritual enemies to turn us aside, unless we take heed, diligent heed. In particular, to *love the Lord our God*, as the best of beings, and the best of friends, and as far as that principle rules in the heart, and is the spring of its pulses, there will be a constant care, and sincere endeavour to *walk in his ways*, in all his ways, even those that are narrow, and up hill, in every particular instance, and in all manner of conversation to *keep his commandments*, and at all times, and in all conditions, with purpose of heart to *cleave unto him*, and to serve him and his honour, and the interests of his kingdom among men, *with all our heart, and with all our soul.* What good counsel was here given to them, is given to us all, God give us grace to take it!

5. He dismisseth them with a blessing, *ver. 6.* particularly the half-tribe of Manasseh, to which Joshua, as an Ephraimite, was somewhat nearer a-kin than to the other two, and who, perhaps, were the more loth to depart, because they left one half of their own tribe behind them, and therefore bidding oft farewell, and lingering behind, had a second dismissal and blessing, *ver. 7.* Joshua not only prayed for them as a friend, but blessed them as a father in the name of the Lord, recommending them, their families, and affairs, to the grace of God. Some, by the blessing Joshua gave them, understand the presents he made them, in recompence of their services; but Joshua being a prophet, and having given them one part of a prophet's reward, in the instructions he gave them, *ver. 5.* no doubt, we must understand this of the other, even the prayers he made for them, as one having authority, and as God's vicegerent.

Being thus dismissed, they returned to *the land of their possession* in a body, *ver.* 9. Ferry-boats being, it is likely, provided for their re-passing Jordan. Tho' matters of families may have occasion to be absent, long absent, from their families sometimes, yet when their business abroad is finished, they must remember home is their place, from which they ought not to wander, as a bird from her nest.

10. ¶ And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that *are* in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

11. ¶ And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. 12. And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. 13. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, 14. And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince, throughout all the tribes of Israel, and each one *was* an head of the house of *their* fathers among the thousands of Israel. 15. And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, 16. Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD? 17. Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, (although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD) 18. But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, *seeing* ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. 19. Notwithstanding if the land of your possession *be* unclean *then* pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORDS tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar, beside the altar of the LORD our God. 20. Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

Here is, 1. The pious care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion, then when they were leaving Canaan's land, that they might not be as the *sons of the stranger*, *utterly separated from God's people*, Isa. lvi. 3. In order to this, they built a great altar on the borders of Jordan, to be a witness for them, that they were Israelites, and as such *partakers of the altar of the Lord*, 1 Cor. x. 18. When they came to Jordan, (*ver.* 10.) they did not consult how to preserve the remembrance of their own exploits in the wars of Canaan, and the services they had done their brethren, by erecting a monument to the immortal honour of the two tribes and a half. But their relation to the church of God, and their interest in the communion of saints, is that which they are solicitous to preserve and perpetuate the proofs and evidences of; and therefore, without delay, when the thing was first proposed by some among them, who, tho' glad to think that they were going towards home, were sorry to think that they were going fromwards the altar of God, immediately they erected this altar, which served as a bridge to keep up their fellowship with the other tribes in the things of God. Some think they built this altar on the Canaan side of Jordan, in the lot of Benjamin, that looking over the river they might see the figure of the altar at Shiloh, when they could not conveniently go to it; but it is more likely that they built it on their own side of the water, for what had they to do to build on another man's land without his consent? And it is said to be over against the land of Canaan, nor would there have been any cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice, if they had not built it among themselves.

This altar was very innocently and honestly designed, but it had been well, if since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offence to their brethren, they had consulted the oracle of God about it before they did it; or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose, and given them the

same explication of their altar before to prevent their jealousy, which they did after to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion; there was no haste of building an altar for the purpose they intended this, but they might have taken time to consider and take advice; yet when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness; God doth, and men should, overlook the weakness of an honest zeal.

2. The holy jealousy of the other tribes for the honour of God and his altar at Shiloh. Notice was presently brought to the princes of Israel, of the setting up of this altar, *ver.* 11. And they knowing how strict and severe that law was, which required them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which God should choose, and not elsewhere, *Deut.* xii. 5, 7. were soon apprehensive, that the setting up of another altar, was an affront to the choice God had lately made of a place to put his name in, and had a direct tendency to the worship of some other god.

Now, 1. Their suspicion was very excusable, for it must be confessed, the thing *prima facie* looked ill, and gave umbrage of a design to set up and maintain a competitor with the altar at Shiloh. It was no strained *innuendo*, from the building an altar, to infer an intention to offer sacrifice upon it, and that might introduce idolatry, and might end in a total apostasy, from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. So great a matter might this fire kindle. God is jealous for his own institutions, and therefore we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to, idolatry.

2. Their zeal upon this suspicion was very commendable, *ver.* 12. When they apprehended that these tribes, which by the river Jordan were separated from them, were separating themselves from God, they took it as the greatest injury that could be done to themselves, and shewed themselves in a readiness, if it were necessary, to put their lives in their hands, in defence of the altar of God, and to take up arms for the chastising and reducing of these rebels, and to prevent the spreading of the infection, if no gentler methods would serve, by cutting off from their body the gangrened member. They all gathered together, and Shiloh was the place of their rendezvous, because it was in defence of the divine charter, lately granted to that place that they now appeared; their resolution was as became a kingdom of priests, who being devoted to God, and his service, did not *acknowledge their brethren*, nor *know their own children*, (*Deut.* xxxiii. 9.) That they would immediately *go up to war against them*, if it appeared they were revolted from God, and in rebellion against him; tho' they were *bone of their bone*, had been *companions with them in tribulation* in the wilderness, and serviceable to them in the wars of Canaan, yet if they turn to *serve other gods*, they will treat them as enemies, not as sons of Israel, but as *children of whoredoms*, for so God had appointed, *Deut.* xiii. 12. They had but newly sheathed their swords, and retired from the perils and fatigues of war, to the rest God had given them, and yet they are willing to begin a new war, rather than be any way wanting in their duty to restrain, repress, and revenge, idolatry, and every step towards it. A brave resolution, and which shews them hearty for their religion, and, we hope, careful and diligent in the practice of it themselves. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first, before they get a head, and plead prescription.

3. Their prudence in prosecution of this zealous resolution, is no less commendable. God had appointed them in cases of this nature, to *enquire and make search*, *Deut.* xiii. 14. that they might not wrong their brethren, under pretence of righting their religion; accordingly they resolve here not to send forth their armies to wage war, till they had first sent their ambassadors to enquire into the merits of the cause, and these men of the first rank, one out of each tribe, and Phinehas at the head of them to be their spokesman, *ver.* 13, 14. Thus was their zeal for God tempered, guided, and governed, with the *meekness of wisdom*. He that knows all things, and hates all ill things, would not punish the worst of criminals, but he would first *go down and see*, *Gen.* xviii. 21. Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon taken up, by an impartial and favourable enquiry into that which is the matter of the offence. The rectifying of mistakes and misunderstandings, and the setting of misconstrued words and actions in a true light, would be the most effectual way to accommodate both private and publick quarrels, and bring them to a happy period.

4. The ambassadors management of this matter, came fully up to the sense and spirit of the congregation concerning it, and speaks much, both of zeal and prudence.

1. The charge they draw up against their brethren, is indeed very high, and admits no other excuse, but that it was in their zeal for the honour of God, and was now intended to justify the resentments of the congregation at Shiloh, and to awaken the supposed delinquents to clear themselves, otherwise they might have suspended their judgment, or mollified it at least, and not have taken it for granted, as they do here, *ver.* 16. that the building of this altar was a *trespass against the God of Israel*, and a trespass, no less heinous than the revolt of soldiers from their captain, (*you turn from following the Lord*) and the rebellion of subjects against their sovereign (*that ye might rebel this day against the Lord*). Hard words, it was well they were not

able to make good their charge. Let not innocency think it strange to be thus misrepresented and accused, *they laid to my charge things that I knew not.*

2. The aggravation of the crime charged upon their brethren is somewhat *far fetched*, ver. 17. Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us? Probably, that is mentioned, because Phinehas, the first commissioner in this treaty, had signalized himself in that matter, Numb. xxv. 7. and because we may suppose they were now about the very place, in which that iniquity was committed on the other side Jordan. It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God, revealed from heaven *against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, which have fallen out in our own time, and which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses of. He minds them of the iniquity of Peor, (1.) As a very great sin, and very provoking to God. The building of this altar seemed but a small matter, but it might lead to an iniquity, as bad as that of Peor, and therefore must be crushed in its first rise. Note, The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin: for the way of sin is down hill. (2.) As a sin that the whole congregation had smarted for, *there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord*, of which in one day there died no less than twenty-four thousand; was not that enough to warn you for ever against idolatry? What, will you bring upon yourselves another plague? Are you so mad upon an idolatrous altar, that you will run yourselves thus upon the sword's point of God's judgments? Doth not our camp still feel from that sin, and the punishment of it? *We are not cleansed from it unto this day*, there are remaining sparks, (1.) Of the infection of that sin, some among us so inclined to idolatry, that if you set up another altar, they will soon take occasion from that, whether you intend it or no, to worship *another God*. (2.) Of the wrath of God against them for that sin; we have reason to fear, that if we provoke God by another sin to visit, he will remember against us the iniquity of Peor, as he threatened to do that of the golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 34.* And dare you wake the sleeping lion of divine vengeance? Note, It is a foolish and dangerous thing for people to think their former sins little, *too little for them*, as those do who add sin to sin, and so *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*. Let therefore the time past suffice, 1 Pet. iv. 3.

3. The reason they give for their concerning themselves so warmly in this matter is very sufficient; they were obliged to it in their own necessary defence, by the law of self-preservation, for if you revolt from God to day, who knows but to morrow his judgments may break in upon the *whole congregation*, ver. 18. as in the case of Achan, ver. 20. He sinned and we all smarted for it, by which we should receive instruction, and from what God did then, infer what he may do, and fear what he will do, if we do not witness against your sin, who are so many, and punish it. Note, The conservators of the publick peace are obliged in justice to the common safety, to use their power for the restraining and suppressing of vice and profaneness, lest, if it be connived at, the sin thereby become national, and bring God's judgments upon the community. Nay, We are all concerned therefore to reprove our neighbour when he doth amiss, *lest we bear sin for him*, Lev. xix. 17.

4. The offer they make is very fair and kind, ver. 19. that if they thought the land of their possession unclean, for want of an altar, and therefore could not be easy without one, rather than they should set up another in competition with that at Shiloh, they should be welcome to come back to the land *where the Lord's tabernacle was*, and settle there, and they would very willingly straiten themselves to make room for them. By this they shewed a sincere and truly pious zeal against schism, that rather than their brethren should have any occasion to set up a separate altar, tho' their pretence for it, as here supposed, was very weak, and grounded upon a great mistake, yet they were willing to part with a considerable share of the land which God himself had by the lot assigned them, to comprehend them, and take them in among them. This was the spirit of Israelites indeed.

21. ¶ Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, 22. The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day) 23. That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering, or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it; 24. And if we have not rather done it for fear of *this* thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? 25. For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you: ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD: 26. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build

us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: 27. But *that it may be* a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings, that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD. 28. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us, or to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again*, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between us and you. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.

We may suppose there was a general convention called of the princes and great men of the separate tribes, to give audience to those ambassadors; or, perhaps, the army as it came home were still encamped together in a body, and not yet dispersed, however it was, there was enough to represent the two tribes and a half and to give their sense.

Their reply to the warm remonstrance of the ten tribes is very fair and ingenuous. They do not retort their charge, upbraid them with the injustice and unkindness of their threatnings, or reproach them for their rash and hasty censures, but give them that soft answer which turns away wrath, avoiding all those *grievous words which stir up anger*; they demur not to their jurisdiction, nor plead that they were not accountable to them for what they had done, nor bid them mind their own business; but, by a free and open declaration of their sincere intention in what they did, free themselves from the imputation they were under, and set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren; to do which they only needed to state the case, and put the matter in a true light.

1. They solemnly protest against any design to use this altar for sacrifice or offering, and therefore were far from setting it up in competition with the altar at Shiloh, or from entertaining the least thought of deserting that. They had indeed set up that which had the shape and fashion of an altar, but they had not dedicated it to a religious use, had had no solemnity of its conservation, and therefore ought not to be charged with a design to put it to any such use. To gain credit to this protestation, here is,

(1.) A solemn appeal to God concerning it, with which they begin their defence, intending thereby to give glory to God first, and then to give satisfaction to their brethren, ver. 22.

(1.) A mighty awe and reverence of God which they express in the form of their appeal; *The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows*. Or, as it might be read somewhat closer to the original, *The God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, he knows*, which speaks his self-existence, and self-sufficiency, he is Jehovah, and his sovereignty and supremacy over all beings and powers whatsoever, even those that are called gods, or that are worshipped. This brief confession of their faith would help to obviate and remove their brethren's suspicion of them, as if they intended to desert the God of Israel, and worship other gods; how could they entertain such a thought, who believed him to be God over all. Let us learn hence always to speak of God with reverence and seriousness, and to mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make their appeals to heaven with a slighty carelessness, God knows, have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is very unlike this here.

(2.) It is a great confidence of their own integrity which they express in the matter of their appeal. They refer the controversy to the God of gods, whose judgment we are sure is *according to truth*, such as the guilty have reason to dread, and the upright to rejoice in. If it be in rebellion or transgression that we have built this altar, to confront the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, to make a party, or to set up any new gods or worships; 1. *He knows it*, ver. 22. for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart, and particularly with all inclinations to idolatry, *Psal. xlv. 20, 21.* that is in a particular manner before him, we believe he knows it, and we cannot by any arts conceal it from him. 2. *Let him require it*, as we know he will, for he is a jealous God. Nothing but a clear conscience would have thus imprecated divine justice to avenge the rebellion, if there had been any. Note, 1. In every thing we do in religion, it highly concerns us to approve ourselves to God in our integrity therein, remembering that he knows the heart. 2. When we fall under the censures of men, it is very comfortable to be able with a humble confidence to appeal to God, concerning our sincerity. See 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

(2.) A sober apology presented to their brethren. *Israel he shall know*. Tho' the record on high, and the witness in our bosoms, are principally to be made sure for us, yet there is a satisfaction besides, which we owe to our brethren, who doubt concerning

concerning our integrity, and which we should be ready to give with meekness and fear. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it, by its fruits, especially those, who tho' they mistake us, yet shew a zeal for the glory of God, as the ten tribes here did.

(3.) A serious abjuration or renunciation of the design which they were suspected to be guilty of. With this they conclude their defence, *ver. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord*, as we own we should, if we had set up this altar for burnt-offerings; no, we abhor the thought of it. We have as great a value and veneration for the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, as any of the tribes of Israel have, and are as firmly resolved to adhere to it, and constantly to attend it; we have the same concern that you have for the purity of God's worship, and the unity of his church; far be it, far be it from us to think of turning away from following God.

2. They fully explain their true intent and meaning in building this altar; and we have all the reason in the world to believe that it is a true representation of their design, and not advanced now to palliate it afterwards; as we have reason to think that these same persons meant very honestly, when they petitioned to have their lot on that side Jordan, tho' then also it was their unhappiness to be misunderstood even by Moses himself.

In their vindication they make it out, that the building of this altar was so far from being a step towards a separation from their brethren, and from the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, that, on the contrary, it was really designed for a pledge and preservative of their communion with their brethren, and with the altar of God, and a token of their resolution to *do the service of the Lord before him*, *ver. 27.* and to continue to do so.

1. They give an account of the fears they had, lest in process of time their posterity, being seated at such a distance from the tabernacle, should be looked upon and treated as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, *ver. 24.* it was for fear of this thing, and the word signifies a great perplexity and solicitude of mind which they were in, until they eased themselves by this expedient. As they were returning home, (and we may suppose it was not thought of before, else they would have made Joshua acquainted with their purpose) some of them in discourse started this matter, and the rest took the hint, and represented to themselves and one another, a very melancholy prospect of what might probably happen in after ages, that their children would be looked upon by the other tribes as having no interest in the altar of God, and the sacrifices there offered. Now indeed they were owned as brethren, and were as welcome at the tabernacle as any other of the tribes, but what if their children after them should be disowned? They by reason of their distance, and the interposal of Jordan, which it was not easy at all times to pass and repass, could not be so numerous and constant in their attendance on the three yearly feasts, as the other tribes, to make a continual claim to the privileges of Israelites, and would therefore be looked upon as incon- siderable members of their church, and by degrees would be rejected as not members of it at all, *so shall your children* (who in their pride will be apt to monopolize the privileges of the altar) *make our children* (who perhaps will not be so careful as they ought to be to keep hold of those privileges) *cease from fearing the Lord*. Note, 1. They that are cut off from publick ordinances are likely to lose all religion, and will by degrees cease from fearing the Lord. Tho' the form and profession of godliness is kept up by many without the life and power of it, yet the life and power of it will not long be kept up without the form and profession of it. You take away grace, if you take away the means of grace. 2. They who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances, cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them, may not be *made to cease from following the Lord*, or be looked upon as having no part in him.

2. The project they had to prevent this, *ver. 26, 27, 28.* Therefore to secure an interest in the altar of God, to those who shall come after us, and to prove their title to it, *we said, let us build an altar, to be a witness between us and you.* That having this copy of the altar in their custody, it might be produced as an evidence of their rights to the privileges of the original. Every one that saw this altar, and observed it was never used for sacrifice and offering, would enquire what was the meaning of it, and this answer would be given to that enquiry. That it was built by those separate tribes, in token of their communion with their brethren, and their joint interest with them in the altar of the Lord. Christ is the great altar, that sanctifies every gift, the best evidence of our interest in him will be the pattern of his Spirit in our hearts, and our conformity to him; if we can produce that it will be a testimony for us, that we have *a part in the Lord*, and an earnest of our perseverance in following him.

30. ¶ And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, and heads of the thousands of Israel, which *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spake,

it pleased them. 31. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD. 32. ¶ And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. 33. ¶ And the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. 34. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, called the altar *Ed*: for it *shall be* a witness between us, that the LORD is God.

We have here the good issue of this controversy, which if there had not been on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was on both sides a zeal for God, might have been of ill consequence, for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, oft prove the most fierce, and most difficult to be taken up. But these contending parties, when the matter was fairly stated and argued, were so happy as to understand one another very well, and so the difference was presently compromised.

1. The ambassadors were wonderfully pleased, when the separate tribes had given in a protestation of the innocency of their intentions in building this altar, (1.) The ambassadors did not call in question their sincerity in that protestation, did not say, you tell us you design it not for sacrifice and offering, but who can believe you? What security will you give us that it shall never be so used? No, *Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things*, believes and hopes the best, and is very loth to give the lie to any. (2.) They did not upbraid them with the rashness and unadvisedness of this action. Did not tell them, if you would do such a thing, and with this good intention, yet you might have had that respect for Joshua and Eleazar, as to have advised with them, or at least have made them acquainted with it, and so have saved the trouble and expence of this embassy. But a little want of consideration and good manners should be excused and overlooked in those who, we have reason to think, mean honestly. (3.) Much less did they go about to fish for evidence to make out their charge, because they had once exhibited it, but were glad to have their mistake rectified, and were not at all ashamed to own it. Proud and peevish spirits when they have passed an unjust censure upon their brethren, tho' never so much convincing evidence be brought of the injustice of it, they will stand to it, and can by no means be persuaded to retract it. These ambassadors were not so prejudiced; their brethrens vindication pleased them, *ver. 30.* They looked upon their innocency as a token of God's presence, *ver. 31.* especially when they found that what was done, was so far from being an indication of their growing cool to the altar of God, that, on the contrary, it was a fruit of their zealous affection to it; *you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord*, i. e. you have not, as we feared, delivered them into the hand of the Lord, or exposed them to his judgments, by the trespass we were jealous of.

2. The congregation was abundantly satisfied, when their ambassadors reported to them their brethrens apology for what they had done. It should seem they stayed together, at least by their representatives, until they heard the issue, *ver. 32.* And when they understood the truth of the matter, it pleased them, *ver. 33.* and they *blessed God*. Note, Our brethrens constancy in religion, their zeal for the power of godliness, and their keeping the *unity of the spirit* in faith and love, notwithstanding the jealousies conceived of them as breaking the *unity of the church*, is that which we should be very glad to be satisfied of, and should make the matter both of our rejoycing and of our thanksgiving, let God have the glory of it, and let us take the comfort of it. Being thus satisfied, they laid down their arms immediately, and were so far from any thoughts of prosecuting the war they had been meditating against their brethren, that we may suppose them willing for the next feast, when they should meet them at Shiloh.

3. The separate tribes were gratified, and since they had a mind to preserve among them this pattern of the altar of God, tho' there was not likely to be that occasion for it which they fancied, yet Joshua and the princes let them have their humour, and did not give orders for the demolishing of it, tho' there was as much reason to fear that it might in process of time be an occasion of idolatry, as there was to hope that ever it might be a preservation from idolatry. Thus did *the strong bear the infirmities of the weak*. Only, care was taken that they having explained the meaning of their altar, that it was intended for no more but a testimony of their communion with the altar at Shiloh, this explanation should be recorded, which was done according to the usage of those times, by giving a name to it, signifying so much, *ver. 34.* they called it *Ed*; a witness. To that and no more.

A witness

A witness of the relation they stood in to God and Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the same common faith, that *Jehovah he is God*; he had no other. It was a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and entire to them, and would be a witness against them if ever they should forsake God, and turn from following after him.

C H A P. XXIII.

In this and the following chapter we have two farewell sermons, which Joshua preached to the people of Israel a little before his death. Had he designed to gratify the curiosity of succeeding ages, he would rather have recorded the method of Israel's settlement in their new conquests, their husbandry, manufactures, trade, customs, courts of justice, and the constitutions of their infant commonwealth, which one would wish to be informed of; but that which he intended in the registers of this book, was to entail on posterity a sense of religion, and their duty to God, and therefore overlooking these things which are the usual subjects of a common history, he here transmits to his reader the methods he took to persuade Israel to be faithful to their covenant with their God, which might have a good influence on the generations to come, who should read those reasonings, as we may hope they had on that generation which then heard them. In this chapter we have, 1. A convention of the state called, ver. 1, 2. probably to consult about the common concerns of their land, and to set in order that which, after some years trial, being left to their prudence, was found wanting. 2. Joshua's speech to them at the opening, or perhaps at the concluding of the sessions, to hear, which was the principal design of their coming together. In it, 1. Joshua minds them of what God had done for them, ver. 3, 4, 9, 14. and what he was ready to do yet farther, ver. 5, 10. 2. He exhorts them carefully and resolutely to persevere in their duty to God, ver. 6, 8, 11. 3. He cautions them against all familiarity with their idolatrous inmates, ver. 7. 4. He gives them fair warning of the fatal consequences of it, if they should revolt from God, and turn to idols, ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. In all which he shewed himself zealous for his God, and jealous over Israel, with a godly jealousy.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old, and stricken in age. 2. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old, and stricken in age: 3. And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you. 4. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea west-ward. 5. And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight, and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you. 6. Be ye therefore very courageous, to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand, or to the left. 7. That ye come not among these nations, these that remain amongst you, neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow your selves unto them: 8. But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. 9. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

As to the date of this edict of Joshua's,

1. No mention at all is made of the place where this general assembly was held; some think it was at Timnath-erah, Joshua's own city, where he lived, and whence, being old, he could not well remove: but it doth not appear that he took so much state upon him, therefore it is more probable this meeting was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of meeting was, and to which place, perhaps, all the males that could, were now come up to worship before the Lord, at one of the three great feasts, which Joshua took the opportunity of for the delivering of this charge to them.

2. There is only a general mention of the time when this was done. It was long after the Lord had given them rest, but it is not said how long, ver. 1. It was (1.) So long as that Israel had time to feel the comforts of their rest and possessions in Canaan, and to enjoy the advantages of that good land. (2.) So long as

that Joshua had time to observe which way their danger lay of being corrupted, viz. by their intimacy with the Canaanites that remained, against which he is therefore careful to arm them.

3. The persons to whom Joshua made this speech, to all Israel, even their elders, &c. So it might be read, ver. 2. they could not all come within hearing, but he called for all the elders; i. e. the privy-counsellors, which in later times constituted the great Sanhedrim, the heads of the tribes, i. e. the noblemen and gentlemen of their respective countries, the judges learned in the laws, that tried criminals, and causes, and gave judgment upon them; and, lastly, the officers, or sheriffs, who were intrusted with the execution of those judgments. These Joshua called together, and to them he addressed himself, (1.) That they might communicate what he said, or at least the sense and substance of it, to those under them, in their respective countries, and so this charge might be dispersed through the whole nation. (2.) Because if they would be prevailed with to serve God and cleave to him, they by their influence on the common people would keep them tight. If great men be good men, they will help to make many good.

4. Joshua's circumstances when he gave them this charge, he was old and stricken in age, ver. 1. probably, it was in the last year of his life, and he lived to be 110 years old, chap. xxiv. 29. And he himself takes notice of it, in the first words of his discourse, ver. 2. when he began to be old, some years ago, God minded him of it, chap. xiii. 1. *thou art old*. But now he did himself feel so much of the decays of age that he needed not to be told of it, he readily speaks of it himself, *I am old and stricken in age*. He useth it, (1.) As an argument with himself to give them this charge, because, being old, he could expect to be but a little while with them to advise and instruct them, and therefore (as St Peter speaks, 2 Pet. i. 13.) *as long as he is in this tabernacle* he will take all opportunities to put them in remembrance of their duty, knowing by the increasing infirmities of age, that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, and desiring that after his decease, they might continue as good as they were now. When we see death hastening towards us, that should quicken us to do the work of life with all our might. (2.) As an argument with them to give heed to what he said. He was old and experienced; and therefore to be the more regarded, for days should speak; he was grown old in their service; and had spent himself for their good, and therefore was to be the more regarded by them. He was old and dying, they would not have him long to preach to them, therefore let them observe what he said now, and lay it up in store, for the time to come.

5. The discourse it self, the scope of which is to engage them, if possible, them, and their seed after them, to persevere in the true faith and worship of the God of Israel.

1. He puts them in mind of the great things God had done for them, now in his days, and under his administration, for here he goes no further back. And for the proof of this, he appeals to their own eyes, ver. 3. *Ye have seen all that the Lord your God has done*, not what I have done, or what you have done, we were only instruments in God's hand, but what God himself had done by me, and for you. (1.) Many great and mighty nations (as the rate of nations then went) were driven out from as fine a country as any was at that time upon the face of the earth, to make room for Israel; you see what he has done to these nations who were his creatures, the work of his hands, and whom he could have made new creatures, and fit for his service, yet see what destruction he has made of them because of you, ver. 3. how he had driven them out from before you, ver. 9. as if they were of no account with him, tho' great and strong in comparison with you. (2.) They were not only driven out, that they might have been, and yet sent to some other country, less rich, to begin a new plantation there, suppose to that wilderness in which Israel had wandered so long, and so they had only exchanged seats with them, but they were trodden down before them; tho' they held out against them with the greatest obstinacy that could be, yet they were subdued before them, which made the possessing of their land so much the more glorious to Israel, and so much the more illustrious an instance of the power and goodness of the God of Israel, ver. 3. *The Lord your God* has not only led you, and fed you, and kept you, but he has fought for you as a man of war, by which title he was known among them, when he first brought them out of Egypt, Exod. xv. 3. So clear and cheap were all their victories, during the course of this long war, that *no man had been able to stand before them*, ver. 9. i. e. to make head against them, so as either to put them in fear, create them any difficulty, or give any check to the progress of their victorious arms. In every battle they carried the day, in every siege they carried the city; their loss before Ai was upon a particular occasion, was inconsiderable, and only served to shew them on what terms they stood with God; but otherwise, never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes, as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan. (3.) They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land, ver. 4. *I have divided to you by lot these nations*, both those which are cut off, and those which remain, not only that you may spoil and plunder them, and live at discretion in them for a time, but to be a sure and last-

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ing inheritance for your tribes. You have it not only under your feet, but in your hands.

2. He assures them of God's readiness to carry on, and compleat this glorious work in due time. It is true, some of the Canaanites did yet remain, and in some places were strong and daring, but that should be no balk to their expectations, when Israel was so multiplied as to be able to replenish this land, God would expel the Canaanites to the last man, provided Israel would pursue their advantages, and carry on the war against them with vigour, *ver. 5. The Lord your God shall drive them from out of your sight*, so that there shall not be a Canaanite to be seen in the land, and even that part of the country which is yet in their hands, ye shall possess. If it were objected, that now the men of war of the several tribes were dispersed to their respective countries, and the army disbanded, it would be difficult to get them together when there was occasion to renew the war upon the remainders of the Canaanites; in answer to that, he tells them what little need they had to be in care about the numbers of their forces, *ver. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand*, as Jonathan did, *1 Sam. xiv. 13*. Each tribe may venture for it self, and for the recovery of its own lot, without fearing disadvantage by the disproportion of numbers, for the Lord your God, whose all-power is, both to inspirit, and to dispirit, and who has all the creatures at his beck, *he it is that fighteth for you*, and how many do you reckon him for?

3. He hereupon most earnestly chargeth them to adhere to their duty, to go on and persevere in the good ways of the Lord, wherein they were so well set out. He exhorts them,

1. To be very courageous, *ver. 6. God fighteth for you against your enemies*, do you therefore *behave your selves valiantly* for him. Keep and do with a firm resolution *all that is written in the book of the law*. He presseth upon them no more than what they were already bound to. Keep with care, do with diligence, and eye what is written with sincerity.

2. To be very cautious. Take heed of missing it, either on the right hand, or on the left, for there are errors and extreams on both hands. Take heed of running either into a profane neglect of any of God's institutions, or into a superstitious addition of any of your own inventions. They must especially take heed of all approaches towards idolatry, the sin to which they were first inclined, and would be most tempted. *ver. 7. (1.) They must not acquaint themselves with idolaters, not come among them to visit them, or be present at any of their feasts or entertainments, for they could not contract any intimacy, or keep up any conversation with them, without danger of infection. (2.) They must not shew the least respect to any idol, not make mention of the name of their gods, but endeavour to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion, that the worship of them may never be revived, let the very name of them be forgotten. Look upon idols as filthy detestable things, not to be named without the utmost loathing and detestation. The Jews would not suffer their children to name swine's flesh, because it was forbidden, lest the naming of it should occasion their desiring of it, but if they had occasion to speak of it, they must call it that strange thing. It is pity, that among Christians the names of the heathen gods are so commonly used, and made so familiar as they are, especially in plays and poems. Let these names which have been set up in rivalry with God, be for ever loathed and lost. (3.) They must not countenance others, in shewing respect to them. They must not only not swear by them themselves, but they must not cause others to swear by them, which supposeth that they must not make any covenants with idolaters, because they, in the confirming of their covenants, would swear by their idols; never let Israelites admit such an oath. (4.) They must take heed of these occasions of idolatry, lest by degrees they should arrive at the highest step of it, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, against the letter of the second commandment.*

3. To be very constant, *ver. 8. Cleave unto the Lord your God*, i. e. delight in him, depend upon him, devote your selves to his glory, and continue to do so to the end, *as you have done unto this day*, ever since you came to Canaan, for being willing to make the best of them, he looks not so far back as the iniquity of Peor. There might be many things amiss among them, but they had not forsaken the Lord their God, and to insinuate his exhortation to perseverance with the more pleasing power, for this he praiseth them. Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you are with him. Those that command should commend; the way to make people better, is to make the best of them. You have cleaved to the Lord unto this day, therefore go on to do so, else you lose the praise and recompence of what you have wrought. Your righteousness will not be mentioned unto you, if you turn from it.

11. Take good heed therefore unto your selves, that ye love the LORD your God. 12. Else, if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even these that remain among you*, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: 13. Know for a certainty, that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of

these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 14. And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. 15. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you: so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. 16. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed your selves to them: then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

Here, 1. Joshua directs them what to do that they might persevere in religion, *ver. 11*. Would we cleave to the Lord, and not forsake him, (1.) We must always stand upon our guard; for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness, take heed therefore, *take good heed to your selves*, to your souls, so the word is, that the inward man be kept clean from the pollutions of sin, and closely employed in the service of God. God has given us precious souls, with this charge, take good heed to them, keep them with all diligence, above all keepings. (2.) What we do in religion, we must do from a principle of love, not by constraint, or from a slavish fear of God, but of choice, and with delight. *Love the Lord your God*, and you will not leave him.

2. He urges God's fidelity to them, as an argument why they should be faithful to him, *ver. 14. I am going the way of all the earth*, I am old and dying; to die, is to go a journey, a journey to our long home: it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go, sooner or later. Joshua himself, tho' so great and good a man, and one that could so ill be spared, cannot be exempted from this common lot. He takes notice of it here, that they might look upon these as his dying words, and regard them accordingly. Or thus, *I am dying*, and leaving you, *me ye have not always*, but if you cleave to the Lord, he will never leave you. Or thus, Now I am near my end, it is proper to look back upon the years that are past, and, in the review, I find, and ye *your selves know it, in all your hearts, and in all your souls*, by a full conviction on the clearest evidence, and the thing has made an impression upon you. That knowledge doth us good, which is seated, not in the head only, but in the heart and soul, and with which we are duly affected; ye know that *not one thing hath failed, of all the good things which the Lord spake concerning you*, and he spake a great many. See *chap. xxi. 45*. God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, &c. and *not one thing had failed* of all he had promised. Now, faith he, has God been thus true to you? Be not you false to him. It is the apostle's argument for perseverance, *Heb. x. 23. He is faithful that has promised*.

3. He gives them fair warning, what would be the fatal consequences of apostasy, *ver. 12, 13, 15, 16*. If you go back, know for a certainty it will be your ruin. Observe,

1. How he describes the apostasy which he warns them against. The steps of it would be, *ver. 12*. growing intimate with idolaters, who would craftily wheedle them, and insinuate themselves into their acquaintance, now they were become lords of the country, to serve their own ends. The next step would be intermarrying with them, drawn to it by their artifices, who would be glad to bestow their children upon these wealthy Israelites. And the consequent of that would be, (*ver. 16.*) *serving their gods*, which were pretended to be the antient deities of the country, and bowing down to them. Thus the way of sin is downhill, and those who have fellowship with sinners, cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. This he represents, (1.) As a base and shameful desertion, it is going back from what you have so well begun, *ver. 12*. (2.) As a most perfidious breach of promise, *ver. 16*. It is a transgression of the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and which you your selves set your hand to. Other sins were transgressions of the law God commanded them, but this was a transgression of the covenant that he commanded them, and amounted to a breach of the relation between God and them, and a forfeiture of all the benefits of the covenant.

2. How he describes the destruction which he warns them of. He tells them, 1. That these remainders of the Canaanites, if they should harbour them, and indulge them, and join in affinity with them, would be snares and traps to them, both to draw them to sin, not only to idolatry, but to all immoralities, which would be the ruin, not only of their virtue, but of their wisdom and sense, their spirit and honour, and also to draw them into foolish

foolish bargains, unprofitable projects, and all manner of inconveniencies, and having thus by under-hand practices decoyed them into one mischief or other; so as to gain advantages against them; they would then act more openly, and be *scourges in their sides*, and *thorns in their eyes*, would perhaps kill, or drive away, their cattle; burn, or steal, their corn; alarm, or plunder, their houses, and would by all ways possible be vexatious to them; for whatever pretences of friendship they might make, a Canaanite, unless professedly to the faith and worship of the true God, would in every age hate the very name and sight of an Israelite. See how the punishment would be made to answer the sin, nay; how the sin it self would be the punishment. 2. That the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them. Besides that, their making leagues with the Canaanites, would give them the opportunity of doing them a mischief, and would be the fostering of snakes in their bosoms, it would likewise provoke God to become their enemy, and would kindle the fire of his displeasure against them. 3. That all the threatnings of the word would be fulfilled, as the promises had, for the God of eternal truth is faithful to both, *ver. 15. As all good things have come upon you according to the promise, so long as you have kept close to God, so all evil things will come upon you, according to the threatening, if you forsake him.* Moses had *set before them good and evil*, they had experienced the good, and were now in the enjoyment of it, and the evil would as certainly come, if they were disobedient. As God's promises are not a fool's paradise, so his threatnings are not bugbears. 4. That it would end in the utter ruin of their church and nation, as Moses had foretold. This is three times mentioned here. Your enemies will vex you *until ye perish from off this good land.* *ver. 13.* Again, God will plague you *until he have destroyed you from off this good land,* *ver. 15.* Heaven and earth will concur to root you out. So that, *ver. 16. ye shall perish from off the good land.* It will aggravate their perdition, that the land from which they shall perish is a good land, and a land which God himself had given them; and which therefore he would have secured to them, if they by their wickedness had not thrown themselves out of it. Thus the goodness of the heavenly Canaan, and the free and sure grant God has made of it, will aggravate the misery of those that shall for ever be shut out and perish from it. Nothing will make them see how wretched they are, so much as to see how happy they might have been. Joshua thus sets before them the fatal consequences of their apostasy, that *knowing the terror of the Lord*, they might be persuaded *with purpose of heart to cleave to him.*

C H A P. XXIV.

This chapter concludes the life and reign of Joshua, in which we have, 1. The great care and pains he took to confirm the people of Israel in the true faith and worship of God; that they might after his death persevere therein. In order to this he called another general assembly of the heads of the congregation of Israel, ver. 1. and dealt with them, (1.) By way of narrative, recounting the great things God had done for them and their fathers, ver. 2—13. (2.) By way of charge to them, in consideration thereof to serve God, ver. 14. (3.) By way of treaty with them, wherein he aims to bring them, (1.) To make religion their deliberate choice, and they did so, with reasons for their choice, ver. 15—18. (2.) To make it their determinate choice, and to resolve to adhere to it, ver. 19—24. (4.) By way of covenant upon that treaty, ver. 25—28. 2. The conclusion of this history, with (1.) The death and burial of Joshua, ver. 29, 30. And Eleazar, ver. 33. And the mention of the burial of Joseph's bones upon that occasion, ver. 32. (2.) A general account of the state of Israel at that time, ver. 31.

1. **A**ND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and they presented themselves before God. 2. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel. Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. 3. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. 4. And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. 5. I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did amongst them: and afterward I brought you out. 6. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and you came unto the sea, and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. 7. And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them, and

your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season. 8. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. 9. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose, and warred against Israel, and sent, and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: 10. But I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. 11. And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand. 12. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites: but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. 13. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them: of the vineyards and olive-yards which ye planted not, do ye eat. 14. ¶ Now therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: and serve ye the LORD.

Joshua thought he had taken his last farewell of Israel; in the solemn charge he gave them in the foregoing chapter, when he said, *I go the way of all the earth*; but God graciously continuing his life longer than he expected, and renewing his strength, he was desirous to improve it for the good of Israel: He did not say, I have taken my leave of them once, and let that serve, but having yet a longer space given him, he summons them together again, that he might try what more he could do to engage them for God. Note, We must never think our work for God done, till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude, it is because he has some further service for us to do.

The assembly is the same with that in the foregoing chapter, the *elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel*, *ver. 1.* But it is here made something more solemn than it was there.

1. The place appointed for their meeting is Shechem, not only because that lay nearer to Joshua than Shiloh, and therefore more convenient now he was infirm, and unfit for travel, but because it was the place where Abraham, the first trustee of God's covenant with this people, settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him, *Gen. xii. 6, 7.* and near which stood mount Gerizim and Ebal, where the people had renewed their covenant with God, at their first coming into Canaan; *Josh. viii. 30.* Of the promises God had made to their fathers, and of the promises they themselves had made to God; this place might serve to put them in mind.

2. They presented themselves, not only before Joshua, but before God in this assembly, *i. e.* they came together in a solemn religious manner, as into the special presence of God, and with an eye to him, speaking to them by Joshua; and, it is probable; the service begun with prayer. It is the conjecture of interpreters, that upon this great occasion, Joshua ordered the ark of God to be brought by the priests to Shechem, which they say, was but about ten miles from Shiloh, and to be set down in the place of their meeting, which is therefore called, *ver. 26. the sanctuary of the Lord*, the presence of the ark making it so at that time; and this was done to grace the solemnity, and to strike an awe upon the people that attended. We have not now any such sensible tokens of the divine presence; but are to believe, that *where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name*, he is as really in the midst of them, as God was where the ark was; and they are indeed presenting themselves before him.

3. Joshua spake to them in God's name, and as from him, in the language of a prophet; *ver. 2. Thus saith the Lord*, Jehovah, the great God, and the God of Israel, your God in covenant, whom therefore you are bound to hear and give heed to. Note, The word of God is to be received by us as his, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it.

His sermon consists of doctrine and application.

1. The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. God by Joshua recounts the marvels of old, I did so and so. They must know and consider, not only that such and such things were done, but that God did them. It is a series of wonders that is here recorded, and perhaps many more were mentioned by Joshua, which for brevity sake are here omitted. See what God had wrought, (1.) He brought Abraham out of *Ur of the Chaldees*, *ver. 2, 3.* He and his ancestors had *served other gods* there, for it was the country, in which, tho' celebrated for learning, idolatry,

try, as some think, had its rise, there *the world by wisdom knew not God*. Abraham, who afterwards was the friend of God, and the great favourite of heaven, was bred up in idolatry, and lived long in it, till God by his grace snatched him as *a brand out of that burning*. Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, and not relapse into that sin, from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered. I took him, faith God, else he had never come out of that sinful state. Hence Abraham's justification is made by the apostle an instance of God's *justifying the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. (2.) He brought him to Canaan, and built up his family, led him through the land to Shechem, where they now were, multiplied his seed by Ishmael, who begat twelve princes, but at last gave him Isaac the promised son, and in him multiplied his seed. When Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, God provided an inheritance for Esau elsewhere in mount Seir, that the land of Canaan might be reserved entire for the seed of Jacob, and the posterity of Esau might not pretend to a share in it. (3.) He delivered the seed of Jacob out of Egypt with a high hand, ver. 5, 6. rescued them out of the hands of Pharaoh and his host at the Red-sea, ver. 6, 7. The same waters were the Israelites' guard, and the Egyptians' grave, and this, in answer to prayer; for tho' we find in the story, that they in that distress murmured against God (*Exod. xiv. 11, 12.*) notice is here taken of their *crying to God*, he graciously accepted those that prayed to him, and overlooked the folly of those that quarrelled with him. (4.) He protected them in the wilderness, where they are here said, not to wander, but to dwell for a long season, ver. 7. So wisely were all their motions directed, and so safely were they kept, that even there they had as certain a dwelling-place, as if they had been in a walled city. (5.) He gave them the land of the Amorites, on the other side Jordan, ver. 8. and there defeated the plot of Balak and Balaam against them, so that Balaam could not curse them, as he desired, and therefore Balak durst not fight them, as he designed, and because he designed it, is here said to do it. The turning of Balaam's tongue to bless Israel, when he intended to curse them, is often mentioned as an instance of the divine power put forth in Israel's favour, as remarkable as any other, because in it God proved (and doth still more than we are aware of) his dominion over the powers of darkness, and over the spirits of men. (6.) He brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan, delivered the Canaanites into their hand, ver. 11. *Sent hornets before them*, when they were actually engaged in battle with the enemy, which with their stings tormented them, and with their noise terrified them, so that they became a very easy prey to Israel. These dreadful swarms first appeared from their war with Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites, and afterwards in their other battles, ver. 12. God had promised to do this for them, *Exod. xxiii. 27, 28.* And here Joshua takes notice of the fulfilling of that promise. See *Exod. xxiii. 27, 28.* *Deut. vii. 20.* These hornets, it should seem, annoyed the enemy more than the artillery of Israel, therefore he adds, *not with thy sword nor bow*. It was purely the Lord's doings. Lastly, They were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other peoples labour, ver. 13.

2. The application of this history of God's mercies to them, is by way of exhortation, to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favour, and that they might be continued to them, ver. 14. Now therefore, in consideration of all this, 1. *Fear the Lord*, the Lord and his goodness, *Hof. iii. 5.* Reverence a God of such infinite power, fear to offend him, and to forfeit his goodness. Keep up an awe of his majesty, a deference to his authority, a dread of his displeasure, and a continual regard to his all-seeing eye upon you. 2. Let your practice be consonant to this principle, and serve him, both by the outward acts of religious worship, and every instance of obedience in your whole conversation, and this *in sincerity and truth*, with a single eye, and an upright heart, and inward impressions, answerable to outward expressions. That is the *truth in the inward part* which God requires, *Psal. li. 6.* For what good will it do us to dissemble with a God that searches the heart? 3. *Put away the strange gods*, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for those they were most in danger of revolting to. It should seem by this charge which is repeated, ver. 23. that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, tho' it may be they did not worship them; these Joshua earnestly urgeth them to throw away, deface them, destroy them, lest you be tempted to serve them. Jacob pressed his household to do this, and at this very place; for when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them *under the oak which was by Shechem*, Gen. xxxv. 2, 4. Perhaps the oak mentioned here, ver. 26. was the same oak, or another in the same place, which might be well called *the oak of reformation*, as there were idolatrous oaks.

15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites,

in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. 16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods. 17. For the LORD our God, he *it is* that brought us up, and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. 18. And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the LORD, for he *is* our God. 19. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD; for he *is* an holy God: he *is* a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. 21. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the LORD. 22. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against your selves, that ye have chosen you the LORD to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses. 23. Now therefore put away (*said he*) the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. 24. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute, and an ordinance in Shechem. 26. ¶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD. 27. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest you deny your God. 28. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

Never was any treaty carried on with better management, nor brought to a better issue, than this of Joshua's with the people, to engage them to serve God. The manner of his dealing with them shews him to be in earnest, and that his heart was much upon it, to leave them under all possible obligations to cleave to him, particularly the obligation of a choice, and of a covenant.

1. Would it be any obligation upon them, if they made the service of God their choice, he here puts them to their choice, not as if it were antecedently indifferent, whether they served God or no, or as if it were at their liberty to refuse his service, but because it would have a mighty influence upon their perseverance in religion, if they embraced it with the reason of men, and with the resolution of men. These two things he here brings them to.

(1.) He brings them to embrace their religion rationally, and intelligently, for it is a reasonable service. The will of man is apt to glory in its native liberty, and, in a jealousy for the honour of that, adheres with most pleasure to that which is its own choice, and is not imposed upon it, therefore it is God's will that this service should be not our chance or a force upon us, but our choice.

Accordingly, 1. Joshua fairly puts the matter to their choice, ver. 15. Where, (1.) He proposeth the candidates that stand for the election. The Lord, Jehovah, on one side, and on the other side, either the gods of their ancestors, which would pretend to recommend themselves to those that were fond of antiquity, and that which was received by tradition from their fathers, or the *gods of their neighbours*, the Amorites, in whose land they dwelt, which would insinuate themselves into the affections of those that were complaisant, and fond of good fellowship. (2.) He supposeth there were those to whom, upon some account or other, it would *seem evil to serve the Lord*. There are prejudices and objections which some people raise against religion, which with those that are inclined to the world and the flesh, have a great force. It seems evil to them, hard and unreasonable, to be obliged to deny themselves, mortify the flesh, take up their cross, &c. But being in a state of probation, it is fit there should be some difficulties in the way, else there were no trial. (3.) He refers it to themselves, *choose you whom you will serve*, choose this day, now the matter is laid thus plainly before you, speedily bring it to a head, and do not stand hesitating. Elijah long after this referred the decision of the controversy between Jehovah and Baal, to the consciences of those with whom he was treating, 1 Kings xviii. 21. Joshua's putting of the matter here to this issue, plainly intimates two things, [1.] That it is the will of God we should every one of us make religion our serious and deliberate choice.

choice. Let us state the matter impartially to ourselves, weigh things in an even balance, and then determine for that which we find to be really true and good. Let us resolve upon a life of serious godliness, not merely because we know no other way, but because really upon search we find no better. [2.] That religion hath so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side, that it may safely be referred to every man that allows himself a free thought, either to choose or refuse it, for the merits of the cause are so plain, that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it. The case is so clear that it determines itself. Perhaps, Joshua designed, by putting them to their choice, thus to try if there were any among them, who, upon so fair an occasion given, would shew a coolness and indifferency towards the service of God; whether they would desire time to consider and consult their friends, before they gave in their answer; that if any such should appear he might set a mark upon them, and warn the rest to avoid them. (4.) He directs their choice in this matter, by an open declaration of his own resolutions. *But as for me and my house, whatever you do, we will serve the Lord*, and I hope you will all be of the same mind. Here he resolves, 1. For himself, *as for me, I will serve the Lord*. Note, The service of God is nothing below the greatest of men; it is so far from being a diminution and disparagement to princes and those of the first rank to be religious, that it is their greatest honour, and adds the brightest crown of glory to them. Observe how positive he is, *I will serve God*. It is no abridgment of our liberty to bind ourselves with a bond to God. 2. For his house, i. e. his family, his children and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. Joshua was a ruler, a judge in Israel, yet he will not make his necessary application to publick affairs an excuse for the neglect of family religion. Those that have the charge of many families, as magistrates and ministers must take special care of their own, 1 *Tim. iii. 4, 5. I and my house will serve God*. 1. Not *my house* without me. He would not engage them to that work which he would not set his own hand to. As some who would have their children and servants good, but will not be so themselves; that is, they would have them go to heaven, but intend to go to hell themselves. 2. Not I, without my house. He supposeth he might be forsaken by his people, but in his house, where his authority was greater, and more immediate, there he would over-rule. Note, When we cannot bring as many as we would to the service of God, we must bring as many as we can, and extend our endeavours to the utmost sphere of our activity; if we cannot reform the land, let us put away iniquity far from our own tabernacle. 3. First I, and then my house. Note, Those that lead and rule in other things, should be first in the service of God, and go before in the best things. Lastly, He resolves to do this, whatever others did. Tho' all the families of Israel should revolt from God, and serve idols, yet Joshua and his family will steadfastly adhere to the God of Israel. Note, Those that resolve to serve God, must not stick at being singular in it, nor be drawn by the crowd to forsake his service. Those that are bound for heaven, must be willing to *swim against the stream*, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.

2. The matter being thus put to their choice, they immediately determine it, by a free, rational, and intelligent declaration, for the God of Israel, against all competitors whatsoever, *ver. 16, 17, 18*. Here, 1. They concur with Joshua in his resolution, being influenced by the example of so great a man, who had been so great a blessing to them, *ver. 18. we also will serve the Lord*. See how much good great men might do, if they were but zealous in religion, by their influence on their inferiors. 2. They startle at the thought of apostatizing from God, *ver. 16. God forbid*, the word intimates the greatest dread and detestation imaginable; far be it, far be it from us, that we or ours should ever *forsake the Lord to serve other gods*. We must be perfectly lost to all sense of justice, gratitude, and honour, ere we can harbour the least thought of such a thing. Thus must our hearts rise against all temptations to desert the service of God, *get thee behind me Satan*. 3. They give very substantial reasons for their choice, to shew that they did not make it purely in complaisance to Joshua, but from a full conviction of the reasonableness and equity of it. They make this choice for and in consideration (1.) Of the many great and very kind things God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness into Canaan, *ver. 17, 18*. Thus they repeat to themselves Joshua's sermon, and then express their sincere compliance with the intentions of it. (2.) Of the relation they stood in to God, and his covenant with them, *we will serve the Lord*, *ver. 18. for he is our God*, who hath graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and to whom we have by solemn vow engaged our selves.

(2.) He brings them to embrace their religion resolutely, and to express a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. Now he hath them in a good mind, he follows his blow, and drives the nail to the head, that it might, if possible, be a nail in a sure place. Fast bind, fast find.

1. In order to this he sets before them the difficulties of religion, and that in it which might be thought discouraging, *ver. 19, 20. Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God*, or as it is in the Hebrew, *he is the holy Gods*, intimating the mystery of the Trinity,

three in one; *holy, holy, holy*: holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit. *He will not forgive. But if you forsake him, he will do you hurt*. Certainly Joshua doth not intend hereby to deter them from the service of God as impracticable, and dangerous. But, 1. He perhaps intends to represent here the suggestions of seducers, who tempted Israel from their God, and from the service of him, with such insinuations as these; that he was a hard master, his work impossible to be done, and he not to be pleased, and if displeased implacable and revengeful; that he would confine their respects to himself only, and would not suffer them to shew the least kindness for any other, and that herein he was very unlike the gods of the nations, which were easy and neither holy nor jealous. It is probable, this was then commonly objected against the Jewish religion, as it has all along been the artifice of Satan ever since he tempted our first parents thus to misrepresent God and his laws, as harsh and severe; and Joshua by his tone and manner of speaking might make them perceive he intended it as an objection, and would put it to them how they would keep their ground against the force of it. Or, 2. He thus expresseth his godly jealousy over them, and his fear concerning them, that notwithstanding the professions they now made of zeal for God and his service, they would afterwards draw back, and if they did, they would find him just and jealous to revenge it. Or, 3. He resolves to let them know the worst of it, and what strict terms they must expect to stand upon with God, that they might sit down and count the cost. *Ye cannot serve the Lord*, except you put away all other gods, for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril if you desert his service; better you had never known it. Thus tho' our master has assured us that *his yoke is easy*, yet lest upon the presumption of that we should grow remiss and careless, he hath also told us, that the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leads to life, that we may therefore strive to enter, and not seek only. *You cannot serve God and mammon*, therefore if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitors with him. You cannot serve God in your own strength, nor will he forgive your transgressions for any righteousness of your own, but *all the seed of Israel must be justified and must glory in the Lord alone, as their righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. they must therefore come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be to no purpose. Or, 4. Joshua thus urges to them the seeming discouragements which lay in their way, that he might sharpen their resolutions, and draw from them a promise yet more express and solemn, that they would continue faithful to God and their religion. He draws it from them that they might catch at it the more earnestly, and hold it the faster.

2. Notwithstanding this remonstrance he makes of the difficulties of religion, they declare a firm and fixed resolution to continue and persevere therein, *ver. 21. Nay, but we will serve the Lord*, we will think never the worse of him for his being a holy and jealous God, nor for his confining his servants to worship himself only. Justly will he consume them that forsake him, but we never will forsake him; not only we have a good mind to serve him, and we hope we shall, but we are at a point, we cannot bear to hear any *intreaties to leave him, or to turn from following after him*, Ruth. i. 17. in the strength of divine grace we are resolved that we will serve the Lord. This resolution they repeat with an explication, *ver. 24. The Lord our God will we serve*, not only be called his servants, and wear his livery only, but our religion shall rule us in every thing, *and his voice will we obey*. And in vain do we call him *master and Lord*, if we do not the things which he saith, Luke vi. 46. This last promise they make in answer to the charge Joshua gave them, *ver. 23. that in order to their perseverance they should* (1.) Put away the images and relicks of the strange gods, and not keep any of the tokens of those other lovers in their custody, if they resolved their *Maker should be their husband*; they promise in this to obey his voice. (2.) That they should *incline their hearts to the God of Israel*, use their authority over their own hearts to engage them for God, not only to set their affections upon him, but to settle them so. These terms they agree to, and thus, as Joshua explains the bargain, they strike it, *The Lord our God will we serve*.

2. The service of God being thus made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a *solemn covenant*, *ver. 25*. Moses had twice publicly ratified this covenant between God and Israel, at mount Sinai, *Exod. xxiv.* and in the plains of Moab, *Deut. xxix. 1*. Joshua had likewise done it once, *chap. viii. 31.* and now the second time. It is here called a statute and an ordinance, because of the strength and perpetuity of its obligation; and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were antecedently bound to by the divine command.

Now to give it the formalities of a covenant, (1.) He calls witnesses, no other but themselves, *ver. 22. Ye are witnesses that ye have chosen the Lord*, he promiseth himself that they would never forget the solemnities of this day, but if hereafter they should break this covenant, he assures them that the professions and promises they had now made, would certainly rise up in judgment against them, and condemn them; and they agreed to it, *we are witnesses*; let us be judged out of our own mouths, if ever we be false to our God. (2.) He put it in writing, and inserted it as we find it here in the sacred canon; *he wrote it in the book*

of the law, ver. 26. in that original which was laid up in the side of the ark, and from thence, probably, it was transcribed into the several copies which the princes had for the use of each tribe. There it was written that their obligation to religion by the divine precept, and that by their own promise might remain on record together. (3.) He erected a memorandum of it, for the benefit of those who perhaps were not conversant with writings, ver. 26, 27. He set up a great stone under an oak, as a monument of this covenant, and perhaps wrote an inscription upon it (by which stones are made to speak) signifying the intention of it. When he saith it had heard what was past, he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and if they should forget what was now done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it, as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them.

The matter being thus settled, Joshua dismissed this assembly of the grandees of Israel, ver. 28. and took his last leave of them, well satisfied in having done his part, by which he had delivered his soul; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads.

29. ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. 30. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-erah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north-side of the hill of Gaash. 31. And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel. 32. ¶ And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamar the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. 33. And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

This book which began with triumphs, here ends with funerals, by which all the glory of man is stained.

1. Here is Joseph buried, ver. 32. He died about two hundred years before in Egypt, but gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise; now therefore the children of Israel, who had brought this coffin full of bones with them out of Egypt, carried it along with them in all their marches through the wilderness (the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, it is probable, taking particular care of it) and kept in their camp till Canaan was perfectly reduced, now at last they deposited in that piece of ground

which his father gave him near Shechem, Gen. xlviii. 22. Probably it was upon this occasion that Joshua called for all Israel to meet him at Shechem, ver. 1. to attend Joseph's coffin to the grave there, so that the sermon in this chapter served both for Joseph's funeral sermon, and his own farewell sermon, and if it were as is supposed in the last year of his life, the occasion might very well mind him of his own death being at hand, for he was now just at the same age that his illustrious ancestor Joseph was arrived to when he died, one hundred and ten years old, compare ver. 24. with Gen. 1. 29.

2. Here is the death and burial of Joshua, ver. 29, 30. We are not told how long he lived after the coming of Israel into Canaan. Dr Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years, but the Jewish chronologers generally say, it was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. He is here called the *servant of the Lord*, the same title that was given to Moses, chap. i. 1. when mention was made of his death; for tho' Joshua was in many respects inferior to Moses, yet in this he was equal with him, that, according as his work was, he approved himself a diligent and faithful servant of God. And he that traded with his two talents, had the same approbation that he had who traded with five, *well done good and faithful servant*. Joshua's burying-place is here said to be on the north-side of the hill Gaash, or the quaking hill; the Jews say it was so called, because it trembled at the burial of Joshua, to upbraid the people of Israel with their stupidity, in that they did not lament the death of that great and good man, so as they ought to have done. Thus at the death of Christ, our Joshua, the earth quaked. The learned bishop Patrick observes, that there is no mention of any days of mourning for Joshua as there were for Moses and Aaron, in which, he saith, St Hierom and other of the fathers think there is a mystery, viz. That under the law, when life and immortality were not brought to so clear a light as they are now, they had reason to mourn and weep for the death of their friends, but now Jesus, our Joshua, has opened the kingdom of heaven, we may rejoice rather.

3. Here is the death and burial of Eleazar the chief priest, who, it is probable, died about the same time that Joshua did, as Aaron in the same year with Moses, ver. 33. The Jews say that Eleazar a little before he died called the elders together, and gave them a charge as Joshua had done. He was buried in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which came to him not by descent, for then it would have pertained to his father first, nor had the priests any cities in mount Ephraim, but either it fell to him by marriage, as the Jews conjecture, or it was freely bestowed upon him, to build a country-seat in, by some pious Israelite that was well affected to the priesthood, for it is here said to be given him; and there he buried his dear father.

Lastly, We have a general idea given us of the state of Israel at this time, ver. 31. While Joshua lived, religion was kept up among them under his care and influence, but soon after he and his contemporaries died it went to decay, so much oftentimes doth one head hold up: how well is it for the gospel church, that Christ, our Joshua, is still with it, by his spirit, and will be always even unto the end of the world.



A N
E X P O S I T I O N,
W I T H
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,
Upon the Book of
J U D G E S.

This is called in the Hebrew Sepher Shophtim, the Book of Judges, which the Syriac and Arabic versions enlarge upon, and call it, The book of the Judges of the children of Israel; the judgments of that nation being peculiar, so were their Judges whose office differed vastly from that of the Judges of other nations. The LXX entitles it only Kēilzi, Judges. It is the history of the commonwealth of Israel, during the government of the Judges from Othniel to Eli; so much of it as God saw fit to transmit to us. It contains the history (according to Dr Lightfoot's computation) of 299 years; reckoning to Othniel of Judah, 40 years; to Ehud of Benjamin, 80 years; to Barak of Naphtali, 40 years; to Gideon of Manasseh, 40 years; to Abimelech his son, 3 years; to Tola of Issachar 23. to Jair of Manasseh 22. to Jephtha of Manasseh 6. to Ibzan of Judah 7. to Elon of Zebulun 10. to Abdon of Ephraim 8. to Samson of Dan 20. In all 299. As for the years of their servitude, as where Eglon is said to oppress them 18 years, and Jabin 20 years, and so some others, those must be reckoned to fall in with some or other of the years of the Judges. The Judges here appeared to have been of eight several tribes; that honour was thus diffused, until at last it centred in Judah; Eli and Samuel the two Judges that fall not within this book, were of Levi. It seems there was no Judge of Reuben or Simeon, Gad or Asher. The history of these Judges in their order we have in this book, to the end of chap. xvi. And then in the five last chapters we have an account of some particular memorable events which happened, as the story of Ruth did, Ruth, i. 1. In the days when the Judges ruled, but not certain in which Judges days; but they are put together at the end of the book, that the thread of the general history might not be interrupted. Now as to the state of the commonwealth of Israel during this period, 1. They do not appear here either so great or so good as one might have expected the character of such a peculiar people should have been; that were governed by such laws, and enriched by such promises. We find them wretchedly corrupted, and wretchedly oppressed by their neighbours about them, and no where in all the book, either in war or council, do they make any figure proportionable to their glorious entry into Canaan. What shall we say to it? God would hereby shew us the lamentable imperfection of all persons and things under the sun, that we may look for compleat holiness and happiness in the other world, and not in this. Yet, 2. We may hope that tho' the historian in this book enlargeth most upon their provocations and grievances, yet that there was a face of religion upon the land; and however there were those among them that were drawn aside to idolatry, yet the tabernacle service according to the law of Moses was kept up, and there were many that attended it. Historians record not the common course of justice and commerce in a nation, taking that for granted, but only the wars, and disturbances that happen, but the reader must consider the other to balance the blackness of them. 3. It should seem that in these times each tribe had very much its government in ordinary within itself, and acted separately without one common head, or council, which occasioned many differences among themselves, and kept them from being or doing any thing considerable. 4. The government of the Judges was not constant but occasional; when it said that after Ehud's victory the land rested 80 years, and after Barak's 40. it is not certain that they lived, much less that they governed, so long; but they and the rest were raised up, and animated by the Spirit of God to do particular service to the publick when there was occasion, to avenge Israel of their enemies, and to purge Israel of their idolatries, which are the two things principally meant by their judging Israel. Yet Deborah, as a prophetess, was attended for judgment by all Israel, before there was occasion for her agency in war, Judg. iv. 4. 5. During the government of the Judges, God was in a more especial manner Israel's king, so Samuel tells them, when they were resolved to throw off this form of government, 1 Sam. xii. 12. God would try what his own law and the constitutions of that would do to keep them in order, and it proved that when there was no king in Israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes; he therefore towards the latter end of this time, made the government of the Judges more constant and universal than it was at first, and at length gave them David, a king after his own heart; then and not till then Israel began to flourish, which should make us very thankful for magistrates both supreme and subordinate, for they are ministers of God unto us for good. Four of the Judges of Israel are canonized, Heb. xi. 32. Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephtha. The learned bishop Patrick thinks the prophet Samuel was penman of this book.

C H A P. I.

This chapter gives us a particular account what sort of progress the several tribes of Israel made in the reducing of Canaan after the death of Joshua. He did (as we say) break the neck of that great work, and put it into such a posture, that they might easily have perfected it in due time, if they had not been wanting to themselves; what they did in order hereunto, and wherein they came short, we are here told. 1. The united tribes of Judah and Simeon did bravely. (1.) God appointed Judah to begin, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Judah took Simeon to act in conjunction with him, ver. 3. (3.) They succeeded in their enterprizes against Bezek, ver. 4—7. Jerusalem, ver. 8. Hebron and Debir, ver. 9—15. Horma, Gaza, and other places, ver. 17, 18, 19. (4.) Yet where there were chariots of iron, their hearts failed them, ver. 19. Mention is made of the Kenites settling among them, ver. 16. 2. The other tribes in comparison with these did but sneakily. (1.) Benjamin failed, ver. 21. 2. The house of Joseph did well against Beth-el, ver. 22—26. but in other places did not improve their advantages, not Manasseh, ver. 27, 28. nor Ephraim, ver. 29. (3.) Zebulun spared the Canaanites, ver. 30. (4.) Asher truckled worse than any of them to the Canaanites, ver. 31, 32. (5.) Naphtali was kept out of the full possession of several of his cities, ver. 33. (6.) Dan was straitened by the Amorites, ver. 34. No account is given of Issachar, nor of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan.

1. **N**OW after the death of Joshua, it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? 2. And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. 3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. 4. And Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites, and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. 5. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites, and the Perizzites. 6. But Adoni-bezek fled, and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs, and his great toes. 7. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8. (Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.)

Here, 1. The children of Israel consult the oracle of God, for direction which of all the tribes should first attempt to clear their country of the Canaanites, and to animate and encourage the rest. It was *after the death of Joshua*; while he lived, he directed them, and all the tribes were obedient to him, but when he died he left no successor in the same authority that he had had; but the people must consult the breast-plate of judgment, and thence receive the word of command, for God himself as he was their king, so he was the Lord of their hosts. The question they ask is, *who shall go up first?* ver. 1. By this time we may suppose they were so multiplied, that the places they were in possession of began to be too strait for them, and they must thrust out the enemy to make room, now they enquire, who should first take up arms? Whether each tribe was ambitious of being first, and so strove for the honour of it, or whether each was afraid of being first, and so strove to decline, it doth not appear, but by common consent the matter was referred to God himself, who is fittest both to dispose of honours, and to cut out work.

2. God appointed that Judah should go up first, and promised him success, ver. 2. *I have delivered the land into his hand* to be possessed, and therefore will deliver the enemy into his hand, that keeps him out of possession, to be destroyed. And why must Judah be first in this undertaking? (1.) Judah was the most numerous and powerful tribe, and therefore let Judah venture first. Note, God appoints service according to the strength he has given. Those that are most able, from them most work is expected. (2.) Judah was first in dignity, and therefore must be first in duty. He it is whom *his brethren must praise*, and therefore he it is that must lead in perillous services. Let the burthen of honour, and the burthen of work go together. (3.) Judah was first served; the lot came up for Judah first, and therefore Judah must first fight. (4.) Judah was the tribe, *out of which our Lord was to spring*: So that in Judah, Christ the lion of the tribe of Judah went before them. Christ engaged the powers of darkness first, and foiled them, which animates us for our conflicts; and it is in him that we are *more than conquerors*. Observe, The service

and the success are put together, Judah shall go up, let him do his part, and then he shall find *I have delivered the land into his hand*. His service will not avail unless God give the success, but God will not give the success, unless he vigorously apply himself to the service.

3. Judah hereupon prepares to go up, but courts his brother and neighbour the tribe of Simeon (the lot of which tribe fell within that of Judah, and was assigned out of it) to join forces with him, ver. 3. Observe here, 1. That the strongest should not despise, but desire, the assistance even of those that are weaker. Judah was the most considerable of all the tribes, and Simeon the least considerable, and yet Judah begs Simeon's friendship, and prays an aid from him; the head cannot say to the foot, *I have no need of thee*, for we are members one of another. 2. Those that crave assistance, must be ready to give assistance, *come with me into my lot*, and then *I will go with thee into thine*. It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites, and all Christians, even those of different tribes, to strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom. Those who thus help one another in love, have reason to hope that God will graciously help them both.

4. The confederate forces of Judah and Simeon take the field. *Judah went up*, ver. 4. and Simeon with him, ver. 3. It is probable, Caleb was commander in chief in this expedition, for who so fit as he who had both an old man's head, and a young man's hand, the experience of age, and the vigour of youth; *Josh. xiv. 10, 11.* and who as should seem by what follows, ver. 10, 11. was not yet in possession of his own allotment. It was happy for them they had such a general, that, according to his name, was all heart. Some think that the Canaanites were got together into a body, a formidable body, when Israel consulted who should go *fight against them*, and that they then began to stir when they heard of the death of Joshua, whose name had been so dreadful to them; but, if so, it proved they did but meddle to their own hurt.

5. God gave them great success. Whether they invaded the enemy, or the enemy first gave them the alarm, *The Lord delivered them into their hand*, ver. 4. Tho' the army of Judah was strong and bold, yet the victory is attributed to God; he *delivered the Canaanites into their hand*, having given them authority, he here gives them ability to destroy them; put it in their power, and so tried their obedience to his command, which was *utterly to cut them off*. Bishop Patrick observes upon this, that we meet not with such religious expressions in the heathen writers, concerning the success of their arms, as we have here and elsewhere in the sacred history; I wish such pious acknowledgments of the divine providence were not grown into disuse at this time, with many that are called Christians. Now (1.) We are told how the army of the Canaanites was routed in the field, in or near Bezek, the place where they drew up, which afterwards Saul made the place of a general rendezvous, 1 *Sam. xi. 8.* he slew ten thousand men, which blow, if followed, could not but be a very great weakening to those that were brought already so very low. (2.) How their king was taken, and mortified. Adoni-bezek, lord of Bezek, so it signifies. There have been those that *called their lands by their own names*, Psal. xlix. 11. but here was one (and there has been many another) that called himself by his land's name. He was taken prisoner after the battle, and we are here told how they used him, they cut off his thumbs to disfit him for fighting, and his great toes that he might not be able to run away, ver. 6. It had been barbarous thus to triumph over a man in misery, and that lay at their mercy, but that he was a devoted Canaanite, and one that had in like manner abused others, which probably they had heard of. Josephus said they cut off his hands and his feet, probably supposing those more likely to be mortal wounds, than only the cutting off his thumbs and his great toes. But this indignity they did him extorted from him an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God, ver. 7. Where observe (1.) What a great man this Adoni-bezek had been, how great in the field, where armies fell before him? How great at home, where kings were *set with the dogs of his flock*; and yet now himself a prisoner, and reduced to the extremity of meanness and disgrace. See how changeable this world, and how slippery its high places are. Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die. (2.) What desolations he had made among his neighbours, he had wholly subdued seventy kings, to that degree as to have them his prisoners, he that was the chief person in a city, was then called a king, and the greatness of their title did but aggravate their disgrace, and fired the pride of him that insulted over them. We cannot suppose that Adoni-bezek had seventy of these petty princes at once his slaves, but first and last, in the course of his reign, he had thus deposed and abused so many, who perhaps were many of them kings of the same cities that successively opposed him, and whom he thus treated to please his own impetuous barbarous fancy, and for terror to others. It seems the Canaanites had been wasted by civil wars, and those bloody ones among themselves, which would very much facilitate the conquering of them by Israel. Judah (saith Dr Lightfoot) in conquering Adoni-bezek, did, in effect, conquer seventy kings. (3.) How justly he was treated, as he had treated others. Thus the righteous God sometimes in his providence makes the punishment to answer

the sin, and observes an equality in his judgments; the spoiler shall be spoiled, and the *treacherous dealer dealt treacherously* with, *Jsa. xxxiii. 1.* And they that *shewed no mercy*, shall have *no mercy shewed them*, *Jam. ii. 13.* See *Rev. xiii. 10.—xviii. 6.* (4.) How honestly he owned the righteousness of God herein. *As I have done, so God has requited me.* See the power of conscience, when God by his judgments awakens it, how it brings sin to remembrance, and subscribes to the justice of God. He that in his pride had set God at defiance, now yields to him, and reflects with as much regret upon the kings under his table, as ever he had looked upon them with pleasure, when he had them there. He seems to own that he was better dealt with, than he had dealt with his prisoners; for tho' the Israelites maimed him (according to the law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, so a thumb for a thumb) yet they did not put him *under the table* to be fed with the crumbs there, because though the other might well be looked upon as an act of justice, that would have favoured more of pride and haughtiness than did become an Israelite.

6. Particular notice is taken of the conquest of Jerusalem, *ver. 8.* Our translators judge it spoken of here, as done formerly in Joshua's time, and only repeated on occasion of Adoni-bezek's dying there, and therefore read it, they had fought against Jerusalem, and put this verse in a parenthesis; but the original speaks of it as a thing now done, and that seems most probable, because it is said to be done by the children of Judah in particular, not by all Israel in general, whom Joshua commanded. Joshua indeed conquered and slew Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, *Josh. x.* But we read not there of his taking the city; probably, while he was pursuing his conquests elsewhere, this Adoni-bezek, a neighbouring prince, got possession of it, whom having conquered in the field, the city fell into their hands, and they slew the inhabitants, except those who retreated into the castle, and held out there till David's time, and they *set the city on fire*, in token of their detestation of the idolatry wherewith it had been deeply infected, yet probably not so as utterly to consume it, but to leave convenient habitations for as many as they had to put into the possession of it.

9. ¶ And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. 10. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron, (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba) and they slew Shefhai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. 11. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: (and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher) 12. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 13. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Calebs younger brother took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 14. And it came to pass when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? 15. And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south-land, give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs. 16. ¶ And the children of the Kenite, Moses father in law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah, into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad, and they went and dwelt among the people. 17. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it: (and the name of the city was called Hormah) 18. Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. 19. And the LORD was with Judah, and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron: 20. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

We have here a further account of that glorious and successful campaign which Judah and Simeon made.

1. The lot of Judah was pretty well cleared of the Canaanites, yet not thoroughly. Those that *dwelt in the mountain* (the mountains that were round about Jerusalem) were driven out, *ver. 9, 19.* but those in the valley kept their ground against them, having *chariots of iron*, such as we read of, *Josh. xvii. 16.* Here the men of Judah failed, and thereby spoiled the influence, which otherwise their example hitherto might have had on the rest of the tribes who followed them in this instance of their cowardise, rather than in all the other instances of their courage. They had iron chariots, and therefore it was thought not safe to attack them; but had not Israel God on their side, *whose chariots are thousands of angels*, *Psal. lxxviii. 17.* before whom these iron chariots would

be but as a stubble to the fire? Had not God expressly promised by the oracle, *ver. 2.* to give them success against the Canaanites in this very expedition, without excepting those that had iron chariots? Yet they suffered their fears to prevail against their faith, they could not trust God under any disadvantages, and therefore durst not face the iron chariots, but meanly withdrew their forces, then when with one bold stroke they might have compleated their victories, and it proved of pernicious consequence. They did run well, what hindered them? *Gal. v. 7.*

2. Caleb was put in possession of Hebron, which, tho' given him by Joshua ten or twelve years ago, (as Dr Lightfoot computes) yet being employed in publick service, for the settling of the tribes, which he preferred before his own private interests, it seems he did not till now make himself master of; so well content was that good man to serve others, while he left himself to be served last; few are like-minded; for *all seek their own*, *Phil. ii. 20, 21.* Yet now the men of Judah all came into his assistance for the reducing of Hebron, *ver. 10.* slew the sons of Anak, and put him in possession of it, *ver. 20.* They gave Hebron unto Caleb. And now Caleb, that he might return the kindness of his countrymen, is impatient to see Debir reduced, and put into the hands of the men of Judah, to expedite which, he proffers his daughter to the person that will undertake to command in the siege of that important place, *ver. 11, 12.* Othniel bravely undertakes it, wins the town and the lady, *ver. 13.* And by his wife's interest and management with her father, gets a very good inheritance for himself and his family, *ver. 14, 15.* We had this passage before, *Josh. xv. 16—19.* where it was largely explained and improved.

3. Simeon got ground of the Canaanites in his border, *ver. 17, 18.* In the eastern part of Simeon's lot, they destroyed the Canaanites in Zephath, and called it Hormah, *destruction*; adding this to some other devoted cities, not far off, which they had some time ago, with good reason called by that name, *Numb. xxi. 2, 3.* And this perhaps was the compleat performance of the vow they then made, that they would utterly destroy these cities of the Canaanites in the south. In the western part they took Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, cities of the Philistines, gained present possession of the cities, but not destroying the inhabitants, they in process of time recovered the cities, and proved inveterate enemies to the Israel of God, and no better could come of doing their work by the halves.

4. The Kenites gained a settlement in the tribe of Judah, choosing it there, rather than in any other tribe, because it was the strongest, and there they hoped to be safe and quiet, *ver. 16.* These were the posterity of Jethro, who either went with Israel when Moses invited them, *Numb. x. 29.* or met them about the same place, when they came up from their wandrings in the wilderness thirty-eight years after, and went with them then to Canaan; and Moses having promised them that they should fare as Israel fared, *Numb. x. 32.* They had at first seated themselves in the city of palm-trees, i. e. Jericho, a city which never was to be rebuilt, and therefore the fitter for them who *dwelt in tents*, and did not mind building. But afterwards they removed into the wilderness of Judah, either out of their affection to that place, because solitary and retired, or out of their affection to that tribe, which perhaps had been in a particular manner kind to them. Yet we find the tent of Jael, who was of that family, far north, in the lot of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, *Judg. iv. 17.* This respect Israel shewed them, to let them fix where they pleased, being a quiet people, that wherever they were, were content with a little. They that molested none, were molested by none. *Blessed are the meek, for thus they shall inherit the earth.*

21. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. 22. ¶ And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the LORD was with them. 23. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el: (now the name of the city before was Luz) 24. And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. 25. And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword: but they let go the man and all his family. 26. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day. 27. ¶ Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 28. And it came to pass when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly

utterly drive them out. 29. ¶ Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer : but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. 30. ¶ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol : but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries. 31. ¶ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor Achzib, nor Helbah, nor Aphik, nor of Rehob : 32. But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land : for they did not drive them out. 33. ¶ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shelesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath ; but he dwelt among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land : nevertheless, the inhabitants of Bethshelesh and of Beth-anath ; became tributaries unto them. 34. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain : for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley. 35. But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shalbim : yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. 36. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akkrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

We are here told upon what terms the rest of the tribes stood with the Canaanites that remained.

1. Benjamin neglected to drive the Jebusites out of that part of the city of Jerusalem which fell to their lot, ver. 21. Judah had set them a good example, and gained them great advantages by what they did, ver. 9. but they did not follow the blow for want of resolution.

2. The house of Joseph bestirred themselves a little to get possession of Beth-el, ver. 22. That city is mentioned in the tribe of Benjamin, *Josh. xviii. 22.* Yet is spoken of there, ver. 13. as a city in the borders of that tribe, and it should seem the line went through it, so that one half of it only belonged to Benjamin, the other half to Ephraim ; and perhaps the activity of the Ephraimites at this time, to recover it from the Canaanites, secured it entirely to them from henceforward, or at least the greatest part of it, for afterwards we find it so much under the power of the ten tribes (and Benjamin was none of them) that Jeroboam set up one of his calves in it. In this account of the expedition of the Ephraimites against Beth-el, observe, 1. Their interest in the divine favour. *The Lord was with them*, and would have been with the other tribes, if they would have exerted their strength. The Chaldee reads it here, as in many other places, *The Word of the Lord was their helper*, viz. Christ himself, the captain of the Lord's hosts, now they acted separately, as well as when they were all in one body. 2. The prudent measures they took to gain the city. They sent spies to observe what part of the city was weakest, or which way they might make their attack with most advantage, ver. 23. These spies got very good information from a man they providentially light on, who shewed them a private way into the town, which was therefore left unguarded, because being not generally known, no danger was suspected on that side : And here, (1.) He is not to be blamed for giving them this intelligence, if he did it from a conviction that *the Lord was with them*, and that by his donation the land was theirs of right, no more than Rahab was for entertaining those whom she knew to be enemies of her country, but friends of God. Nor, (2.) Are they to be blamed who *shewed him mercy*, gave him and his family, not only their lives, but liberty to go wherever they pleased. For one good turn requires another : But it seems he would not join himself to the people of Israel, he feared them rather than loved them, and therefore he removed after a colony of the Hittites, which it should seem was gone into Arabia, and settled there upon Joshua's invasion of the country ; with them this man chose to dwell, and among them he built a city, a small one, we may suppose, such as planters use to build, and in the name of it preserved the ancient name of his native city, Luz, an almond-tree, preferring that before its new name which carried religion in it, Beth-el, the house of God. 3. Their success. The spies brought or sent notice of the intelligence they had gained to the army, which improved their advantages, surprized the city, and put them *all to the sword*, ver. 25.

But besides this achievement, it seems, the children of Joseph did nothing remarkable. (1.) Manasseh failed to drive out the Canaanites from several very considerable cities in their lot, and did not make any attempt upon them, ver. 27. But the Canaanites being in possession, were resolved not to quit it, they would dwell in that land, and Manasseh had not resolution enough to offer to dispossess them ; as if there were no meddling with them, unless they were willing to resign, which it was not to be expected they ever would be. Only as Israel got strength, they got ground, and served themselves, both by their contributions, and by their personal services, ver. 28, 35. (2.) Ephraim likewise, tho' a powerful tribe, neglected Gezer, a considerable city,

and suffered the Canaanites to dwell among them, (ver. 29.) which, some think, intimates their allowing them a quiet settlement, and indulging them the privileges of an unconquered people, not so much as making them tributaries.

3. Zebulun, perhaps inclining to the sea-trade, for it was foretold that it should be a haven of ships, neglected to reduce Kitron and Nahalol, ver. 30. and only made the inhabitants of those places tributaries to them.

4. Asher quitted itself worse than any of the tribes, ver. 31, 32. not only in leaving more towns than any other of them in the hands of the Canaanites, but in submitting to the Canaanites, instead of making them tributaries ; for so the manner of expression intimates, that the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, as if the Canaanites were the more numerous, and the more powerful, would still be the lords of the country, and the Israelites must be only upon sufferance among them.

5. Naphtali also permitted the Canaanites to live among them, ver. 33. only by degrees they got them so far under, as to exact contributions from them.

6. Dan was so far from extending his conquests there where his lot lay, that wanting spirit to make head against the Amorites, he was forced by them to retire into the mountains, and inhabit the cities there, but durst not venture into the valley, where it is probable the chariots of iron were, ver. 34. Nay, and some of the cities in the mountains were kept against them, ver. 35. Thus were they straitened in their possessions, and forced to seek for more room at Laish, a great way off, chap. xviii. 1, &c. In Jacob's blessing Judah is compared to a lion, Dan to a serpent ; now observe, how Judah with his lion-like courage, prospered and prevailed, but Dan, with all his serpentine subtilty, could get no ground ; craft and artful management, doth not always effect the wonders it pretends to. What Dan came short of doing, it seems his neighbours, the Ephraimites in part did for him ; they put the Amorites under tribute, ver. 35.

Upon the whole matter, it appears, that the people of Israel were generally very careless, both of their duty and interest in this thing ; they did not what they might have done, to expel the Canaanites, and make room for themselves. And, 1. It was owing to their slothfulness and cowardise, they would not be at the pains to compleat their conquests, like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. 2. It was owing to their covetousness ; the Canaanites labour, and money, would do them more good (they thought) than their blood, and therefore they were willing to let them live among them, that they might make a hand of them. 3. They had not that dread and detestation of idolatry, which they ought to have had, thought it pity to put these Canaanites to the sword, tho' the measure of their iniquity was full, thought it would be no harm to let them live among them, and that they should be in no danger from them. 4. The same that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it, and that was unbelief. Distrust of the power and promise of God lost them their advantages, and run them into a thousand mischiefs.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A particular message, which God sent to Israel by an angel, and the impression it made upon them, ver. 1—5. 2. A general idea of the state of Israel, during the government of the judges. In which observe, (1.) Their adherence to God, while Joshua and the elders lived, ver. 6—10. (2.) Their revolt afterwards to idolatry, ver. 11—13. (3.) God's displeasure against them, and his judgments upon them for it. (4.) His pity towards them, shewed in raising them up deliverers, ver. 16—18. (5.) Their relapse into idolatry after the judgment was over, ver. 17—19. (6.) The full stop, God in anger put to their successes, ver. 20—23. These are the contents, not only of this chapter, but of the whole book.

1. **A**ND the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers ; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land, you shall throw down their altars, but ye have not obeyed my voice : why have ye done this ? 3. Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you : but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lift up their voice and wept. 5. And they called the name of that place Bochim : and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

It was the privilege of Israel, that they had not only a law in general sent them from heaven, once for all, to direct them into, and keep them in, the way to happiness, but that they had particular messages sent them from heaven, as there was occasion, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, when at any time they turned aside out of that way. Besides the written word they had before them to read, they often *heard a sword behind them, saying this is the way*, Isa. xxx. 21. Here begins that way of God's dealing with them. When they would not hear Moses, let it be tried, whether they will hear the prophets. In these verses, we have a very awakening sermon that was preached to them when they began to cool in their religion.

1. The preacher was an *angel of the Lord*, ver. 1. not a prophet, not Phinehas, as the Jews conceit; gospel ministers are indeed called angels of the churches, but the Old Testament prophets are never called angels of the Lord; no doubt, this was a messenger from heaven. Such extraordinary messengers we sometimes find in this book, employed in the raising up of the Judges that delivered Israel, as Gideon and Samson, and now to shew how various the good offices are they do for God's Israel, here is one sent to preach to them, to prevent their falling into sin and trouble. This extraordinary messenger was sent to command, if possible, the greater regard to the message, and to affect the minds of a people, whom nothing seemed to affect but what was sensible. The learned bishop Patrick, is clearly of opinion, that this was not a created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, the same that appeared to Joshua, as *captain of the hosts of the Lord*, who was God himself. Christ himself, saith Dr Lightfoot; who but God and Christ could say, *I made you to go up out of Egypt?* Joshua had lately admonished them, to take heed of entangling themselves with the Canaanites, but they regarded not the words of a dying man, the same warning therefore is here brought them by the living God himself, the Son of God appearing as an angel. If they slight his servants, surely they will reverence his son. This angel of the Lord is said to come up from Gilgal, perhaps not walking on the earth, but flying swiftly, as the angel Gabriel did to Daniel, in the open firmament of heaven; but whether walking or flying, he seemed to come fromwards Gilgal, for a particular reason, Gilgal was long their head quarters after they came into Canaan, many signal favours they had there received from God, and there the covenant of circumcision was renewed, (*Mic. vi. 5.*) of all which, it was designed they should be minded by his coming from Gilgal. The remembrance of *what we have received and heard*, will prepare us for a warning to hold fast, Rev. iii. 2, 3.

2. The persons to whom this sermon was preached, were *all the children of Israel*, ver. 4. A great congregation for so great a preacher! They were assembled either for war, each tribe sending in its forces for some great expedition, or rather for worship. and then the place of their meeting must be Shiloh, where the tabernacle was, at which they were all to come together three times a year; when we attend upon God in instituted ordinances, we may expect to hear from him, and to receive his gifts at his own gates. The place is called *Bochim*, ver. 1. because it gained that name upon this occasion. All Israel needed the reproof, and warning here given, and therefore it is spoken to them all.

3. The sermon it self is short, but very close. God here tells them plainly, (1.) What he had done for them, ver. 1. He had brought them out of Egypt, a land of slavery and toil, into Canaan, a land of rest, liberty, and plenty. The miseries of the one served as a foil to the felicities of the other. God had herein been kind to them, true to the oath sworn to their fathers, had given such proofs of his power, as left them inexcusable, if they distrusted it, and such engagements to his service, as left them inexcusable, if they deserted it. (2.) What he had promised to them. *I said, I will never break my covenant with you.* When he took them to be his peculiar people, it was not with any design to cast them off again, or to change them for another people at his pleasure; let them but be faithful to him, and they should find him unchangeably constant to them. He told them plainly the covenant he entered into with them should never break, unless it broke on their side. (3.) What were his just and reasonable expectations from them, ver. 2. That being taken into covenant with God, they should make no league with the Canaanites, who were both his enemies and theirs. That having set up his altar, they should throw down their altars, lest they should be a temptation to them to serve their gods. Could any thing be demanded more easy? (4.) How they had in this very thing, which he had most insisted on, disobeyed him. But ye have not in so small a matter obeyed my voice. In contempt of their covenant with God, and their confederacy with each other in that covenant, they made leagues of friendship with the idolatrous devoted Canaanites, and connived at their altars, tho' they stood in competition with God's, *Why have ye done this?* What account can you give of this perverseness of yours at the bar of right reason? What apology can you make for your selves, or what excuse can you offer? They that throw off their communion with God, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, know not what they do now, and will have nothing to say for themselves in the day of account shortly. (5.) How they must expect to smart by, and for this their folly, ver. 3. Their tolerating the Canaanites among them would (1.) Put

a period to their victories; you will not drive them out, saith God, and therefore I will not; thus their sin was made their punishment. Thus they who indulge their lusts and corruptions which they should mortify, forfeit the grace of God, and it is justly withdrawn from them. If we will not resist the devil, we cannot expect that God should tread him under our feet. (2.) It would involve them in continual troubles. They shall be in your sides to gore you, which way soever you turn, always doing you one mischief or other. Those deceive themselves, who expect advantage by friendship with those that are enemies to God. (3.) It would (which was worst of all) expose them to constant temptation, and draw them to sin. Their gods (their abominations, so the Chaldee) will be a snare to you, you will find your selves wretchedly entangled in an affection to them, and it will be your ruin, so some read it. Those that approach sin, are justly left to themselves to fall into sin, and to perish in it. God often makes mens sin their punishment, and thorns and snares are *in the way of the froward*, who will walk contrary to God.

4. The good success of this sermon is very remarkable, the people *lift up their voice and wept*, ver. 4. (1.) The angel had told them of their sins which they thus expressed their sorrow for, they lift up their voice in the confusion of sin, crying out against their own folly and ingratitude, and wept, as those that were both ashamed of themselves, and angry at themselves, as having acted so directly contrary, both to their reason, and to their interest. (2.) The angel had threatened them with the judgments of God, which they thus expressed their dread of; they lift up their voice in prayer to God to turn away his wrath from them, and wept for fear of that wrath. They relented upon this alarm, and their hearts melted within them, and trembled at the word, and not without cause. This was good, and a sign that the word they heard made an impression upon them; it is a wonder sinners can ever read their bibles with dry eyes: but this was not enough, they wept, but we do not find that they reformed, that they went home and destroyed all the remains of idolatry and idolaters among them. Many are melted under the word, that harden again, before they are cast into a new mould. However this general weeping, (1.) Gave a new name to the place, ver. 5. they called it *Bochim, Weepers*, a good name for our religious assemblies to answer. Had they kept close to God and their duty, no voice but that of singing had been heard in their congregation, but by their sin and folly they had made other work for themselves, and now nothing is to be heard but the voice of weeping. (2.) It gave occasion for a solemn sacrifice, they *sacrificed there unto the Lord*, being (as is supposed) met at Shiloh, where God's altar was. They offered sacrifice to turn away God's wrath, and to obtain his favour, and in token of their dedication of themselves to him, and to him only, making a covenant by this sacrifice. The disease being thus taken in time, and the physick administered working so well, one would have hoped a cure might have been effected. But by the sequel of the story, it appears to have been too deeply rooted to be wept out.

6. ¶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. 8. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. 9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres in the mount of Ephraim, on the north-side of the hill Gaash. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11. ¶ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. 14. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. 15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. 16. ¶ Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. 17. And yet they would

not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. 18. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: (for it repented the LORD because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them, and vexed them) 19. And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods, to serve them, and to bow down unto them: they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice: 21. I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them, of the nations which Joshua left when he died: 22. That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. 23. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily, neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

The beginning of this paragraph is only a repetition of what account we had before of the people's good character, during the government of Joshua, and of his death and burial, *Josh. xxiv. 29.* Which comes in here again, only to make way for the following account, which this chapter gives of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel, now the historian undertakes to shew that they were so, and that that may appear the more clear, he looks back a little, and takes notice, (1.) Of their happy settlement in the land of Canaan. Joshua having distributed this land among them, dismissed them to the quiet and comfortable possession of it, *ver. 6.* He sent them away, not only every tribe, but every man to his inheritance, no doubt, giving them his blessing. (2.) Of their continuance in the faith and fear of God's holy name, as long as Joshua lived, *ver. 7.* As they went to their possessions with good resolutions to cleave to God, so they persisted for some time in these good resolutions; as long as they had good rulers, that set them good examples, gave them good instructions, and reprov'd, and restrained the corruption that crept in among them: and as long as they had fresh in remembrance the great things God did for them when he brought them into Canaan; they that had seen those wonders, had so much sense as to believe their own eyes, and so much reason as to serve that God who had appeared so gloriously on their behalf; but they that followed, because they had not seen, believed not. (3.) Of the death and burial of Joshua, which gave a fatal stroke to the interests of religion among that people, *ver. 8, 9.* Yet so much sense they had of their obligations to him, that they did him honour at his death, buried him in Timnath-heres; so it is called here, not as in Joshua, Timnath-serah. Heres signifies the sun; a representation of which some think was set upon his sepulchre, and gave name to it, in remembrance of the sun's standing still at his word. So divers of the Jewish writers say; but I much question whether an image of the sun would be allowed to the honour of Joshua, at that time, when by reason of mens general proneness to worship the sun, it would be in danger of being abused to the dishonour of God. (4.) Of the rising up of a new generation, *ver. 10.* All that generation in a few years wore off, their good instructions and examples died and were buried with them, and there arose another generation of Israelites who had so little sense of religion, and were in so little care about it, that, notwithstanding all the advantages of their education, one might truly say, that they knew not the Lord, knew him not aright, knew him not as he had revealed himself, else they would not have forsaken him. They were so entirely devoted to the world, so intent upon the business of it, or so indulgent of the flesh in ease and luxury, that they never minded the true God and his holy religion, and so were easily drawn aside to false gods, and their abominable superstitions.

And so he comes to give us a general idea of the series of things in Israel, during the time of the Judges; the same repeated in the same order.

1. The people of Israel forsook the God of Israel, and gave that worship and honour to the dunghill deities of the Canaanites, which was due to him alone. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! Hath a nation, such a nation so well fed, so well taught, changed its God, such a God, a God of infinite power, unspotted purity, inexhaustible goodness, and so very jealous of a competitor, for stocks and stones that could do neither good nor evil, Jer. ii. 11, 12.* Never was there such an instance of folly, ingratitude, and perfidiousness. Observe how it is described here, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* In general, they did evil, nothing

could be more evil, *i. e.* more provoking to God, nor more prejudicial to themselves; and it was in the sight of the Lord; all evil is before him, but he takes special notice of the sin of having any other god. In particular, 1. They forsook the Lord, *ver. 12.* and again, *ver. 13.* this was one of the two great evils they were guilty of, *Jer. ii. 13.* They had been joined to the Lord in covenant, but now they forsook him, as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband. They forsook the worship of the Lord, so the Chaldee: for they that forsake the worship of God, do in effect forsake God himself. It aggravated this, that he was the God of their fathers, so that they were born in his house, and therefore bound to serve him; and that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, he loosed their bonds, and upon that account also they were obliged to serve him. 2. When they forsook the only true God, they did not turn atheists, nor were they such fools as to say, there is no God; but they followed other gods; so much remained of pure nature as to own a God, yet so much appeared of corrupt nature as to multiply gods, and to take up with any, and to follow the fashion, not the rule, in religious worship. Israel had the honour of being a peculiar people, and dignified above all others, and yet so false were they to their own privileges, that they were fond of the gods of the people that were round about them. Baal and Ashtaroath, he-gods and she-gods, they made their court to sun and moon. Jupiter and Juno. Baalim signifies lords, and Ashtaroath, blessed ones. Both plural, for when they forsook Jehovah who is one, they had gods many, and lords many, as a luxuriant fancy pleased to multiply them. Whatever they took for their gods, they served them, and bowed down to them, gave honour to them, and begged favours from them.

2. The God of Israel was hereby provoked to anger, and delivered them up into the hand of their enemies, *ver. 14, 15.* He was wroth with them, for he is a jealous God, and true to the honour of his own name; and the way he took to punish them for their apostasy, was to make those their tormentors whom they yielded to as their tempters. They made themselves as mean and miserable by forsaking God, as they would have been great and happy, if they had continued faithful to him. (1.) The scale of victory turned against them. After they forsook God, whenever they took the sword in hand, they were as sure to be beaten, as before they had been sure to conquer. Formerly their enemies could not stand before them, but wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was for them; when they began to cool in their religion, God suspended his favour, and stopped the progress of their successes, would not drive out their enemies any more, *ver. 2.* only suffered them to keep their ground; but now when they were quite revolted to idolatry, the war turned directly against them, and they could not any longer stand before their enemies. God would rather give the success to those that had never known nor owned him, than to those that had, but had now deserted him. Wherever they went, they might perceive that God himself was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them, *Isa. lxiii. 10.* (2.) The balance of power then turned against them of course. Whoever would, might spoil them; whoever would, might oppress them; God sold them into the hands of their enemies; not only he delivered them up freely, as we do that which we have sold, but he did it upon a valuable consideration, that he might get himself honour as a jealous God, who would not spare even his own peculiar people when they provoked him. He sold them as insolvent debtors are sold, *Mat. xviii. 25.* by their sufferings to make some sort of reparation to his glory, for the injury it sustained by their apostasy. Observe how their punishment (1.) Answered what they had done, they served the gods of the nations, that were round about them, even the meanest, and God made them serve the princes of the nations that were round about them, even the meanest. He that is company for every fool, is justly made a fool of by every company. (2.) How it answered what God had spoken. The hand of heaven was thus turned against them as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn, *ver. 15.* referring to the curse and death set before them in the covenant, with the blessing and life. Those that have found God true to his promises, may from thence infer that he will be as true to his threatenings.

3. The God of infinite mercy took pity on them in their distresses, tho' they had brought themselves into them by their own sin and folly, and wrought deliverance for them. Nevertheless, tho' the trouble was the punishment of their sin, and the accomplishment of God's word, yet they were in process of time saved out of their trouble, *ver. 16, 18.* Where observe, 1. The inducement of their deliverance. It came purely from God's pity, and tender compassion, the reason was fetched from within himself. It is not said it repented them because of their iniquities (for it appears, *ver. 17.* that many of them continued unreformed) but it repented the Lord because of their groanings, tho' it is not so much the burthen of a sin, as the burthen of affliction that they are said to groan under. It was true they deserved to perish forever under his curse, yet this being the day of his patience and our probation, he doth not stir up all his wrath. He might in justice have abandoned them, but he could not for pity do it. 2. The instruments of their deliverance; God did not send angels from heaven to do it, or bring in any foreign power for their rescue, but

but raised up Judges from among themselves, as there was occasion, men to whom God gave extraordinary qualifications for, and calls to, that special service for which they were designed, which was to reform and deliver Israel, and whose great attempts he crowned with wonderful success, *the Lord was with the Judges* when he raised them up, and so they became saviours. Observe (1.) In the days of the greatest degeneracy and distress of the church, there shall be some whom God will either find or make fit to redress its grievances, and set things to right. (2.) God must be acknowledged in the seasonable raising up of useful men for publick service. He spirits men with wisdom and courage, gives them hearts to act and venture. All that are in any way the blessings of their country, must be looked upon as the gifts of God. (3.) Whom God calls he will own, and give them his presence, whom he raiseth up he will be with. (4.) The judges of a land are its saviours.

4. This degenerate people were not effectually and thoroughly reformed, no not by their judges, *ver. 17, 19.* (1.) Even while their Judges were with them, and active in the work of reformation, there were those that would not hearken to their judges, but at that very time *went a whoring after other gods*, so mad were they upon their idols, and so obstinately bent to back-slide. They had been espoused to God, but broke the marriage covenant, and *went a whoring after false gods*; idolatry is spiritual adultery, so vile and base and perfidious a thing is it, and so hardly are those reclaimed that are addicted to it. (2.) Those that in the times of reformation began to amend, yet turned quickly out of the way again, and became as bad as ever. The way they turned out of was that which their godly ancestors walked in, and set them out in, but they soon started from under the influence both of their fathers good example, and of their own good education. The wicked children of godly parents do so, and will therefore have a great deal to answer for. (3.) However, *when the judge was dead*, they looked upon the dam which checked the stream of their idolatry as removed, and then it flowed down again with so much the more fury, and the next age seemed to be rather the worse for the attempts that were made towards reformation, *ver. 19. they corrupted themselves more than their fathers*; strove to out-do them in multiplying strange gods, and inventing profane and impious rites of worship, as it were in contradiction to their reformers. They ceased not, or, as the word is, they would not let fall any of their own doings; grew not ashamed of those idolatrous services that were most odious, nor weary of those that were most barbarous, would not so much as diminish one step of their hard and stubborn way. Thus they that have forsaken the good ways of God, which they have once known and professed, commonly grow most daring and desperate in sin, and have their hearts most hardened.

5. God's just resolution hereupon was, still to continue the rod over them. (1.) Their sin was sparing the Canaanites; and this in contempt and violation of the covenant God had made with them, and the commands he had given them, *ver. 20.* (2.) Their punishment was that the Canaanites were spared, and so they were beaten with their own rod. They were not all delivered into the hand of Joshua while he lived, *ver. 23.* Our Lord Jesus, tho' he spoiled principalities and powers, yet did not compleat his victory at first, *we see not yet all things put under him*, there are remains of Satan's interest in the church; as there were of the Canaanites in the land; but our Joshua lives for ever, and will in the great day perfect his conquests. After Joshua's death little was done of a long time against the Canaanites, Israel indulged them, and grew familiar with them, and therefore God would not drive them out any more, *ver. 21.* If they will have such inmates as these among them, let them take them, and see what will come of it. God chose their delusions, *Isa. lxvi. 4.* Thus men cherish and indulge their own corrupt appetites and passions, and instead of mortifying them make provision for them, and therefore God justly leaves them to themselves under the power of their sins, which will be their ruin; *So shall their doom be, themselves have decided it.* These remnants of the Canaanites were left to prove Israel, *ver. 22. whether they would keep the way of the Lord or no*, not that God might know them, but that they might know themselves. It was to try, 1. Whether they could resist the temptations to idolatry, which the Canaanites would lay before them. God had told them they could not, *Deut. vii. 4.* But they thought they could; well, faith God, I will try you; and, upon trial, it was found that the tempters charms were quite too strong for them. God has told us how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts are, but we are not willing to believe it, until by making bold with temptation we find it too true by sad experience. 2. Whether they would make a good use of the vexations which the remaining natives would give them, and the many troubles they would occasion them, and would thereby be convinced of sin, and humbled for it, reformed, and driven to God and their duty, whether by continual alarms from them they would be kept in awe, and made afraid of provoking God.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter, 1. A general account of Israel's enemies is premised, and of the mischief they did them, *ver. 1—7.* 2. A particular account of the brave exploits done by the three first of the judges. 1. Othniel, whom God raised up to fight Israel's battles, and plead their cause against the king of Mesopotamia, *ver. 8—11.* 2. Ehud, who was employed in rescuing Israel out of the hands of the Moabites, and did it by stabbing the king of Moab, *ver. 12—30.* 3. Shamgar, who signalized himself in a encounter with the Philistines, *ver. 31.*

1. **N**OW these are the nations which the LORD left to prove Israel by them, (even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; 2. Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof) 3. Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon, unto the entering in of Hamath. 4. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5. ¶ And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: 6. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

We are here told what remained of the old inhabitants of Canaan. (1.) There were some of them that kept together in united bodies, unbroken, *ver. 3.* The five lords of the Philistines, viz. Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron, *1 Sam. vi. 17.* Three of these cities had been in part reduced, *Judg. i. 18.* but it seems the Philistines (probably with the help of the other two, which strengthened their confederacy with each other from thence forward) recovered the possession of them. These gave the greatest disturbance to Israel of any of the natives, especially in the latter times of the judges, and they were never quite reduced, until David did it. There was a particular nation called Canaanites, that kept their ground with the Sidonians, upon the coast of the great sea. And in the north the Hivites held much of mount Lebanon, it being a remote corner, in which perhaps they were supported by some of the neighbouring states. But besides these, (2.) There were every where in all parts of the country some scatterings of the nations, *ver. 5.* Hittites, Amorites, &c. which by Israel's foolish connivance and indulgence were so many, so easy, and so insolent, that the children of Israel are said to dwell among them, as if the right had still remained in the Canaanites, and the Israelites had been in by their permission, and only as tenants at will.

Now concerning these remnants of the natives, Observe,

1. How wisely God permitted them to remain. It had been mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, as an act of God's justice, that he let them remain for Israel's correction. But here another construction is put upon it, and it appears to have been an act of God's wisdom, that he let them remain for Israel's real advantage, that those who had not known the wars of Canaan, might learn war, *ver. 1, 2.* It was the will of God that the people of Israel should be enured to war. (1.) Because their country was exceeding rich and fruitful, and abounded with dainties of all sorts, which if they were not sometimes made to know hardship, would be in danger of sinking them into the utmost degree of luxury, and effeminacy. They must sometimes wade in blood, and not always in milk and honey, lest even their men of war, by the long disuse of arms, should become as soft and nice as the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; a temper as destructive to every thing that is good, as it is to every thing that is great, and therefore to be carefully watched against by all God's Israel. (2.) Because their country lay very much in the midst of enemies, by whom they must expect to be insulted, for God's heritage was as a speckled bird, the birds round about were against her, *Jer. xii. 9.* It was therefore necessary they should be well disciplined, that they might defend their coasts when invaded, and might hereafter enlarge their coast as God had promised them. The art of war is best learned by experience, which not only acquaints men with martial discipline, but (which is no less necessary) inspires them with a martial disposition. It was for the interest of Israel to breed soldiers, as it is the interest of an island to breed sea-men, and therefore God left Canaanites among them, that, by the lesser difficulties and hardships they met with in encountering them, they might be prepared for greater; and by running with the footmen might learn to contend with horses, *Jer. xii. 5.* Israel was a figure of the church militant, that must fight

fight its way to a triumphant state. The soldiers of Christ must endure hardness, 2 Tim. ii. 3. corruption is therefore left remaining in the hearts even of good Christians, that they may learn war, may keep on the *whole armour of God*, and stand continually upon their guard. The learned bishop Patrick offers another sense of ver. 2. *that they might know to teach them war*, i. e. they shall know what it is to be left to themselves. Their fathers fought by a divine power; God taught *their hands to war*, and their fingers to fight, but now they have forfeited his favour, let them learn what it is to fight like other men.

2 How wickedly Israel mingled themselves with those that did remain. One thing God intended in leaving them among them was to prove Israel, ver. 4. that those who were faithful to the God of Israel, might have the honour of resisting the Canaanites allurements to idolatry, and that those who were false and insincere might be discovered, and might fall under the shame of yielding to those allurements. Thus in the Christian churches there must needs be heresies, *that they which are perfect may be made manifest*, 1 Cor. xi. 19. Israel upon trial proved ill. They joined in marriage with the Canaanites, ver. 6. tho' they could not advance either their honour or their estate by marrying with them. They would mar their blood instead of mending of it, and sink their estates instead of raising of them by such marriages. 2. Thus they were brought to join in worship with them, they served their gods, ver. 6. *Baalim and the groves*, ver. 7. i. e. the images that were worshipped in groves of thick trees, which were a sort of natural temples. In such unequal matches, there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope that the good will reform the bad; as it is in laying two pears together, the one rotten, and the other sound. When they inclined to worship other gods they *forgot the Lord their God*. In complaisance to their new relations they talked of nothing but Baalim and the groves, so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God; and forgot there was such a being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, it is apt to forget God; because out of sight he is out of mind; and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world; they have *perverted their way*, for they have *forgotten the Lord their God*.

8. ¶ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years. 9. And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Calebs younger brother. 10. And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war, and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. 11. And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

We now come to the records of the government of the particular Judges, the first of which was Othniel, in whom the story of this book is knit to that of Joshua, for even in Joshua's time Othniel began to be famous; by which it appears that it was not long after Israel's settlement in Canaan, before their purity began to be corrupted; and their peace (by consequence) disturbed. And those who have taken pains to enquire into the sacred chronology are generally agreed, that the Danites idolatry, and the war with the Benjamites for abusing the Levites concubine, tho' related in the latter end of this book, happened about this time, under or before Othniel's government, who tho' a judge was not such a king in Israel, as would keep men from doing what was *right in their own eyes*.

In this short narrative of Othniel's government, we have, 1. The distress that Israel was brought into, for their sin, ver. 8. God was justly displeased with them for plucking up the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the nations, and plucked up the hedge of their protection, and laid them open to the nations; set them to sale as goods he would part with, and the first that laid hands on them was Chushan-rishathaim, king of that Syria which lay between the two great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia, which signifies the midst of rivers. It is probable this was a warlike prince, and aiming to enlarge his dominions, invaded the two tribes first and the other side Jordan that lay next him, and afterwards perhaps by degrees penetrated into the heart of the country, and as far as he went put them under contribution, exacting it with rigour, and perhaps quartering soldiers upon them. Laban was of this country, who oppressed Jacob with a hard service, but it lay at such a distance, that one could not have thought Israel's trouble should have come from such a far country, which shews so much the more of the hand of God in it.

2. Their return to God in this distress. *When he slew them, then they sought him* whom before they had slighted. The chil-

dren of Israel, even the generality of them *cried unto the Lord*, ver. 9. At first they made light of their trouble, and thought they could easily shake off the yoke of a prince at such a distance, but when it continued eight years, they began to feel the smart of it, and then they cried under it, who before had laughed at it. They who in the day of their mirth had cried to Baalim and Ashtaroth, now they are in trouble cry to the Lord from whom they had revolted, whose justice brought them into this trouble, and whose power and favour could alone help them out of it. Affliction makes those cry to God with importunity, who before would scarce speak to him.

3. God's return in mercy to them for their deliverance. Tho' need drove them to him, he did not therefore reject their prayers, but graciously raised up a deliverer, or saviour, as the word is. Observe 1. Who the deliverer was; it was Othniel, who married Caleb's daughter; one of the old stock that had *seen the works of the Lord*, and had himself, no question, kept his integrity, and secretly lamented the apostasy of his people, but waited for a divine call to appear publickly for the redress of their grievances. He was now, we may suppose, far in years, when God raised him up to this honour, but the decays of age were no hindrance to his usefulness when God had work for him to do. 2. Whence he had his commission, not of man, or by man, but *the spirit of the Lord came upon him*, ver. 10. The spirit of wisdom and courage to qualify him for the service, and a spirit of power to excite him to it, so as to give him and others full satisfaction, that it was the will of God he should engage in it. The Chaldee saith, *the spirit of prophecy remained in him*. 3. What method he took; he first judged Israel, reprov'd them, called them to an account for their sins, and reformed them, and then went out to war; that was the right method. Let sin at home be conquered, that worst of enemies, and then enemies abroad will be the easier dealt with. Thus let Christ be our judge and law-giver, and then *he will save us*, and on no other terms, Isa. xxxiii. 22. 4. What good success he had. He prevailed to break the yoke of the oppression, and as it should seem to break the neck of the oppressor, for it is said, *the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim into his hand*. Now was Judah, of which tribe Othniel was, *as a lion's whelp gone up from the prey*. 5. The happy consequence of Othniel's good services. The land, tho' not getting ground, yet had rest, and some fruits of the reformation, forty years; and it had been perpetual if they had kept close to God and their duty.

12. ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. 13. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon, and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm-trees. 14. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. 15. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. 16. But Ehud made him a dagger (which had two edges) of a cubit length, and he did gird it under his raiment, upon his right thigh. 17. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. 18. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 19. But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him, went out from him. 20. And Ehud came unto him, and he was sitting in a summer-parlour, which he had for himself alone: and Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. 21. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. 22. And the haft also went in after the blade: and the fat closed upon the the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly, and the dirt came out. 23. Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. 24. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw, that behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer-chamber. 25. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour: therefore they took a key, and opened them: and behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. 26. And Ehud escaped while they tarried: and passed beyond the quarries

quarries, and escaped unto Seirath. 27. And it came to pass when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim; and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them. 28. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. 29. ¶ And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. 30. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel: and the land had rest fourscore years.

Ehud is the next of the judges whose achievements are related in this history, and here is an account of his actions.

1. When Israel sins again, God raiseth up a new oppressor, ver. 12, 13, 14. It was an aggravation of their wickedness that they did evil again, after they had smarted so long for their former iniquities, promised so fair when Othniel judged them, and received so much mercy from God in their deliverance. What, and after all this again to break his commandments? Was the disease obstinate to all the methods of cure, both corrosives and lenitives? It seems it was. Perhaps they thought they might make the more bold with their old sins, because they saw themselves in no danger from their old oppressor, the powers of that kingdom were weakened and brought low; but God made them know that he had variety of rods wherewith to chastise them; he *strengthened Eglon king of Moab against them*. This oppressor lay nearer them than the former, and therefore would be the more mischievous to them; God's judgments thus approached them gradually, to bring them to repentance. When Israel dwelt in tents, but kept their integrity, Balak king of Moab that would have strengthened himself against them was baffled; but now they had forsaken God, and worshipped the gods of the nations round about them, and perhaps those of the Moabites among the rest; here was another king of Moab whom God strengthened against them, put power into his hands, tho' a wicked man, that he might be a scourge to Israel; the *staff in his hand*, with which he beat Israel, was *God's indignation*, *howbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so*, Isa. x. 6, 7. Israelites did ill, and we may suppose Moabites did worse, yet because God commonly punished the sins of his own people in this world, that the flesh being destroyed, the spirit may be saved, Israel is weakened, and Moab strengthened against them. God would not suffer the Israelites when they were the stronger, to distress the Moabites, nor give them any disturbance tho' they were idolaters, Deut. ii. 9. yet now he suffered the Moabites to distress Israel, and strengthened them on purpose that they might: *Thy judgments, O God, are a great deep*. The king of Moab took to his assistance the Ammonites and Amalekites, ver. 13. and that strengthened him; and we are here told how they prevailed.

(1.) They beat them in the field, they *went and smote Israel*, ver. 13. not only those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, who tho' first settled, being frontier tribes, were most disturbed, but those also within Jordan, for they made themselves masters of the city of palm-trees, which, it is probable, was a strong hold, erected near the place where Jericho had stood, for that was so called, Deut. xxxiv. 3. into which the Moabites put a garrison, to be a bridle upon Israel, and to secure the passes of Jordan, for the preservation of the communication with their own country. It was well for the Kenites that they had left this city, chap. i. 16. before it fell into the hands of the enemy. See how quickly the Israelites lost that by their own sin, which they had gained by miracles of divine mercy.

(2.) They made them to serve, ver. 14. *i. e.* exacted tribute from them, either the fruits of the earth in kind, or money in lieu of them. They neglected the service of God, and did not pay him his tribute, thus therefore did God recover from them that *wine and oil*, that silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal, Hof. ii. 8. What should have been paid to the divine grace, and was not, was distrained for, and paid to the divine justice. The former servitude, ver. 8. lasted but eight years, this eighteen; for if lesser troubles do not do the work, God will send greater.

2. When Israel prays again, God raiseth up a new deliverer, ver. 15. His name, Ehud. We are here told (1.) It was a Benjamite, the city of palm-trees lay within the lot of this tribe, by which it is likely they suffered most, and therefore stirred first to shake off the yoke. It is supposed by the chronologers, that the Israelites war with Benjamin for the wickedness of Gibeah, by which that whole tribe was reduced to six hundred men happened before this, so that we may well think that tribe to be now the weakest of all the tribes, yet out of it God raised up this deliverer, in token of his being perfectly reconciled to them, to manifest his own power in ordaining strength out of weakness, and that he might bestow *more abundant honour upon that part which lacked*, 1 Cor. xii. 24.

(2.) That he was left-handed, as it seems, many of that tribe were, chap. xx. 16. Benjamin signifies the son of the right-hand, and yet multitudes of them were left-handed; for mens natures do not

always answer their names. The LXX says, he was an ambidexter, one that could use both hands alike, supposing that that was an advantage to him in the action he was called to; but the Hebrew phrase, that he was *shut of his right-hand*, intimates that either through disease, or disuse, he made little or no use of that, but of his left-hand only; and so was the less fit for war, because he must needs handle his sword but awkwardly, yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right-hand, whom he would *make strong for himself*, Psal. lxxx. 17. It was *God's right-hand* that gained Israel the victory, Psal. xlv. 3. not the right-hand of the instruments he employed.

We are here told what Ehud did for the deliverance of Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. He saved the oppressed by the destroying the oppressors, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and the set time to favour Israel was come.

1. He put to death Eglon king of Moab; I say, put him to death, not he murdered or assassinated him, but as a judge, or minister of divine justice, executed the judgments of God upon him; as an implacable enemy to God and Israel. The story is particularly related.

(1.) He had a fair occasion of access to him; being an ingenious active man, and fit to stand before kings, his people chose him to carry a present, in the name of all Israel, over and above their tribute, to their great lord the king of Moab, that they might find favour in his eyes, ver. 15. The present is called *mincha* in the original, which is the word used in the law, for the offerings that were presented to God, to obtain his favour; these the children of Israel had not offered to in their season, to the God that loved them, and now to punish them for their neglect, they are laid under a necessity of bringing their offerings to a heathen prince that hated them. Ehud did his errand to Eglon, offered his present with the usual ceremony, and expressions of dutiful respect, the better to colour what he intended, and to prevent suspicion.

(2.) It should seem from the first he designed to be the death of him, God putting it into his heart, and letting him know also that the motion was from himself, by the spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried with them their own evidence, and so gave him full satisfaction both of the lawfulness, and of the success of this daring attempt; of both which he had reason enough to doubt. If he be sure God bids him do it, he is sure both that he may do it, and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and bring us off both against our consciences, and against all the world. That he compassed and imagined the death of this tyrant, appears by the preparation he made of a weapon for the purpose; a short dagger, but half a yard long, like a bayonet, which might easily be concealed under his clothes, ver. 16. perhaps, because none were suffered to come near the king with their swords by their sides. This he wore on his right thigh, that it might be the readier to his left-hand, and might be the less suspected.

(3.) He contrived how to be alone with him; which he might the easier be, now he had not only made himself known to him, but ingratiated himself by the present, and the complements, which, perhaps on that occasion, he had passed upon him. Observe, how he laid his plot: 1. He concealed his design, even from his own attendants, brought them part of the way, and then ordered them to go forward towards home, while he himself, as if he had forgot something behind him, went back to the king of Moab's court, ver. 18. There needed but one hand to do the execution, had more been engaged, they could not so safely have kept counsel, nor so easily have made an escape. 2. He returned from the quarries by Gilgal, ver. 19. from the graven images (so it is in the margin) which were with Gilgal; set up perhaps by the Moabites with the twelve stones which Joshua had set up there. Some suggest that the sight of these idols stirred up in him such an indignation against the king of Moab, as put him upon the execution of that design, which otherwise he had thought to have let fall for the present. Or, perhaps he came so far as to these images, that telling from what place he returned, the king of Moab might be the more apt to believe he had a message from God. 3. He begged a private audience, and obtained it in a withdrawing-room, here called a Summer-parlour. He told the king he had a secret errand to him, who thereupon ordered all his attendants to withdraw, ver. 19. Whether he expected to receive some private instructions from an oracle, or some private informations concerning the present state of Israel, as if Ehud would betray his country, it was a very unwise thing for him to be all alone with a stranger, and whom he had reason to look upon as an enemy; but those that are marked for ruin are infatuated, and their *hearts hid from understanding*, God deprives them of discretion.

(4.) When he had him alone he soon dispatched him. His Summer-parlour, where he used to indulge himself in ease and luxury, was the place of his execution. (1.) Ehud demands his attention to a *message from God*, ver. 20. and that message was a dagger: God sends to us by the judgments of his hand, as well as by the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Eglon pays respect to a message from God. Tho' a king, tho' a heathen king, tho' rich and powerful, tho' now tyrannizing over the people of God, tho' a fat unwieldy man, that could not easily rise, nor stand long, tho' in private, and what he did not under observation, yet when he expected to receive orders from heaven, he rose out of his seat, whether it were low and easy, or whether it were high and stately,

he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet when a message from God is delivered to them, study to shew by all the marks of carelessness how little they regard it. Ehud in calling what he had to do a message from God, plainly avouches a divine commission for it; and God's inclining Eglon to stand up to it, did both confirm the commission, and facilitates the execution. (3.) The message was delivered, not to his ear, but immediately, and literally to his heart, into which the fatal knife was thrust, and was left there, *ver. 21, 22.* His extream fatness made him unable to resist, or to help himself; probably it was the effect of his luxury and excess, and when *the fat closed up the blade*, God would by that circumstance shew how those that pamper the body, do but prepare for their own misery. However it was an emblem of his carnal security and senselessness. His heart was as fat as grease, and in that he thought himself inclosed. See *Psal. cxix. 70.—xvii. 10.* Eglon signifies a calf, and he fell like a fatted calf, by the knife, an acceptable sacrifice to divine justice. Notice is taken of the coming out of the dirt, or dung, that the death of this proud tyrant may appear the more ignominious and shameful. He that had been so very nice and curious about his own body, to keep it easy and clean, shall now be found wallowing in his own blood and excrements. Thus doth God pour contempt upon princes. Now this fact of Ehud's, (1.) May justify it self, because he had special direction from God to do it, and it was agreeable to the usual method, which under that dispensation God took to avenge his people of their enemies, and to manifest to the world his own justice. But, (2.) It will by no means justify any now in doing the like. No such commissions are now given, and to pretend to them is to blaspheme God, and make him patronize the worst of villainies. Christ bid Peter sheath the sword, and we find not that he bid him draw it again.

(5.) Providence wonderfully favoured his escape, when he had done the execution. (1.) The tyrant fell silently, without any shriek or out-cry, which might have been overheard by his servants at a distance. How silently doth he go down to the pit, choaked up, it may be with his own fat, which stifled his dying groans, tho' he had made so great a noise in the world, and had been *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.* (2.) The heroick executioner of this vengeance, with such a presence of mind, as discovered, not only no consciousness of guilt, but a mighty confidence in the divine protection, shut the doors after him, took the key with him, and passed through the guards with such an air of innocency, and boldness, and unconcernedness, as made them not at all to suspect his having done any thing amiss. (3.) The servants that attended in the anti-chamber, coming to the door of the inner-parlour, when Ehud was gone to know their master's pleasure, and finding it locked, and all quiet, they concluded he was lain down to sleep, had covered his feet upon his couch, and was gone to consult his pillow about the message he had received, and to dream upon it, *ver. 24.* and therefore would not offer to open the door. Thus by their care, not to disturb his sleep, they lost the opportunity of revenging his death. See what comes of mens taking state too much, and obliging those about them to keep their distance, some time or other it may come against them more than they think of. (4.) The servants at length opened the door, and found their master had *slept indeed his long sleep,* *ver. 25.* The horror of this tragical spectacle, and the confusion it must needs put them into, to reflect upon their own inconsideration, in not opening the door sooner, quite put by the thoughts of sending pursuivants after him that had done it, whom now they despaired of overtaking. (5.) Ehud by this means made his escape to Seirath, a thick wood; so some, *ver. 26.* it is not said any where in this story, what was the place in which Eglon lived now, but there being no mention of Ehud's passing, and re-passing Jordan, I am inclined to think that Eglon had left his own country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, and made his principal residence at this time in the city of palm-trees, within the land of Canaan, a fatter country than his own, and that there he was slain, and then the quarries by Gilgal were not far off him. There where he had settled himself, and thought he had sufficiently fortified himself to lord it over the people of God, there he was cut off, and proved to be fed for the slaughter like a lamb in a large place.

2. Ehud having slain the king of Moab, gave a total rout to the forces of the Moabites that were among them, and so effectually shook off the yoke of their oppression. (1.) He raised an army presently in mount Ephraim, at some distance from the head quarters of the Moabites, and headed them himself, *ver. 27.* The trumpet he blew was indeed a jubilee trumpet, proclaiming liberty, and a joyful sound it was to the oppressed Israelites, who for a long time had heard no other trumpets but those of their enemies. (2.) Like a pious man, and as one that did all this in faith, he took encouragement himself, and gave encouragement to his soldiers from the power of God engaged for them, *ver. 28.* *Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered your enemies into your hands;* we are sure to have God with us, and therefore may go on boldly, and shall go on triumphantly. (3.) Like a politick general, he first secured the fords of Jordan, set strong guards upon all these passes to cut off the communications between the Moabites

that were in the land of Israel (for upon them only his design was) and their own country, on the other side Jordan; that if upon the alarm given them they resolved to fly, they might not escape thither, and if they resolved to fight, they might not have assistance thence. Thus he shut them up in that land as their prison, in which they were pleasing themselves at their palace and paradise. (4.) He then fell upon them, and put them all to the sword, ten thousand of them, which, it seems, was the number appointed to keep Israel in subjection, *ver. 29.* *There escaped not a man* of them. And they were the best and choicest of all the king of Moab's forces, all lusty men, men of bulk and stature, and not only able bodied, but great spirited too, and men of valour, *ver. 29.* But neither their strength nor their courage stood them in any stead, when the set time was come for God to deliver them into the hand of Israel. (5.) The consequent of this victory was, that the power of the Moabites was wholly broken in the land of Israel; the country was cleared of these oppressors, and *the land had rest eighty years,* *ver. 30.* We may hope that there was likewise a reformation among them, and a check given to idolatry, by the influence of Ehud, which continued a good part of this time. It was a great while for the land to rest fourscore years, yet what is that to the saints everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan.

31. ¶ And after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad, and he also delivered Israel.

When it was said the land had rest eighty years, some think it is meant chiefly of that part of the land which lay eastward on the banks of Jordan, which had been oppressed by the Moabites, but it seems by this passage here, that the other side of the country which lay south-west, was in that time infested by the Philistines, against whom Shamgar made head.

1. It seems Israel needed deliverance, for he delivered Israel, how great the distress was Deborah afterwards related in her song, *chap. v. 6.* That *in the days of Shamgar the high-ways were unoccupied, &c.* That part of the country which lay next to the Philistines, were so infested with their rapparees, that people could not travel the roads in safety, but were in danger of being set upon and robbed, nor durst they dwell in the unguarded villages, but were forced to take shelter in the fortified cities.

2. God raised him up to deliver them, as it should seem, while Ehud was yet living, but superannuated. So inconsiderable were the enemies for number, that, it seems, the killing of six hundred of them amounted to a deliverance of Israel, and so many he slew with an ox-goad; or, as some read it, a plough-share. It was probable, he was himself following the plough, when the Philistines made an inroad upon the country to ravage it, and God put it into his heart to oppose them; the impulse being sudden and strong, and having neither sword and spear to do execution with, he took the instrument that was next hand, some of the tools of his plough, and with that killed so many hundred men, and came off unhurt. See here, 1. That God can make those eminently serviceable to his glory, and his church's good, whose extraction, education, and employment, is very mean and obscure. He that has the residue of the spirit, could, when he pleased, make ploughmen judges and generals, and fishermen apostles. 2. It is no matter how weak the weapon is, if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleaseth, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chuseth to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.

C H A P. IV.

The method in the history of Deborah and Barak, the heroes in this chapter, is the same with that before. Here is, (1.) Israel revolted from God, ver. 1. (2.) Israel oppressed by Jabin, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Israel judged by Deborah, ver. 4, 5. (4.) Israel rescued out of the hands of Jabin. (1.) Their deliverance is concerted between Deborah and Barak, ver. 6—9. (2.) It is accomplished by their joint-agency. Barak takes the field, ver. 10. Sisera, Jabin's general, meets him, ver. 12, 13. Deborah encourageth him, ver. 14. And God gives him a compleat victory. The army routed, ver. 15, 16. The general forced to flee, ver. 17. And there where he expected shelter, had his life stolen from him by Jael while he was asleep, ver. 18—21. which compleats Barak's triumph, ver. 22. and Israel's deliverance, ver. 23, 24.

1. **A**ND the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. 2. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. 3. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Here is, 1. Israel backsliding from God, they again *did evil in his sight*, forsook his service and worshipped idols, for that was the sin which did now most easily beset them, *ver. 1.* See in this, (1.) The strange strength of corruption which hurries men into sin, notwithstanding the most frequent instances of its fatal consequences. The bent to backslide is very hardly restrained. (2.) The common ill effects of a long peace. The land had rest eighty years, which should have confirmed them in their religion, but, on the contrary, it made them secure and wanton, and indulgent of those lusts which the worship of the false gods was calculated for the gratification of. Thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them, Jeshurun waxeth fat and kicketh.* (3.) The great loss which a people sustains by the death of good governours. They did evil, because Ehud was dead. So it may be read. He kept a strict eye upon them, restrained and punished every thing that looked towards idolatry, and kept them close to God's service. But when he was gone they revolted, fearing him more than God.

2. Israel oppressed by their enemies. When they forsook God, he forsook them, and then they became an easy prey to every spoiler. They alienated themselves from God, as if he were none of theirs, and then God alienated them as none of his; they that threw themselves out of God's service, threw themselves out of his protection; *what has my beloved to do in my house?* When she has thus played the harlot, *Jer. xi. 15.* he *sold them into the hands of Jabin*, *ver. 2.* This Jabin reigned in Hazor, as another of the same name, and perhaps his ancestor had done before him, whom Joshua routed, slew, and burnt his city, *Josh. xi. 1, 10.* But it seems in process of time the city was rebuilt, the power regained, the loss retrieved, and by degrees the king of Hazor becomes able to tyrannize over Israel, who by sin had lost all their advantages against the Canaanites. This servitude was longer than either of the former, and much more grievous; Jabin, and his general Sisera, did mightily oppress Israel. That which aggravated the oppression, was, 1. That this enemy was nearer them than any of the former, in their borders, in their bowels, and by that means had the more opportunity to do them a mischief. 2. That they were the natives of the country, who bore an implacable enmity to them, for invading and dispossessing them, and when they had them in their power, would be so much the more cruel and mischievous towards them in revenge of the old quarrel. 3. That these Canaanites had, when time was, been conquered and subdued by Israel, were of old sentenced to be their servants, *Gen. ix. 25.* and might now have been under their feet, and utterly incapable of giving them any disturbance, if their own slothfulness, cowardise, and unbelief, had not suffered them thus to get head. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they themselves had foolishly spared, could not but be very grievous.

3. Israel returning to their God, they *cried unto the Lord*, when distress drove them to him, and they saw no other way of relief. Those that slight God in their prosperity, will find themselves under a necessity of seeking to him when they are in trouble.

4. ¶ And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim, and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphthali, and said unto him, hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go, and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun? 7. And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots, and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour: for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

The year of the redeemed is at length come, when Israel was to be delivered out of the hands of Jabin, and restored again to their liberty, which we may suppose the northern tribes, that lay nearest the oppressor, and felt most of the effects of his fury, did in a particular manner cry to God for. For the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will God arise. Now here we have,

1. The preparation of the people for their deliverance, by the prophetick conduct and government of Deborah, *ver. 4, 5.* Her name signifies a Bee, and she answered her name by her industry, sagacity, and great usefulness to the publick, her sweetness to her friends, and sharpness to her enemies. She is said to be the wife of Lapidoth, the termination not commonly found in the name of

a man; therefore some make it the name of a place, she was a woman of Lapidoth; others take it appellatively, Lapidoth signifies Lamps; the Rabbins say, she had employed her self in making wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle, and having stooped to that mean office for God, she was afterwards thus preferred. Or she was a woman of illuminations, or of splendors, one that was extraordinary knowing and wise, and so came to be very eminent and illustrious. Concerning her, we are here told, (1.) That she was intimately acquainted with God, she was a prophetess, one that was instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and had gifts of wisdom, which she attained to, not in an ordinary way; she *heard the words of God*, and probably *saw the visions of the Almighty.* (2.) That she was entirely devoted to the service of Israel. She judged Israel at the time that Jabin oppressed them, and perhaps, she being a woman, was the more easily permitted by the oppressor to do it. She judged, not as a princess, by any civil authority conferred upon her, but as a prophetess, and as God's mouth to them, correcting abuses, and redressing grievances, especially those which related to the worship of God. The children of Israel came up to her from all parts to judgment, not so much for the deciding of controversies between man and man, as for advice in the reformation of what was amiss in things pertaining to God. Those among them, who before had secretly lamented the impieties and idolatries of their neighbours, but knew not where to apply themselves for the restraining of them, now made their complaints to Deborah, who by the sword of the Spirit, shewing them the judgment of God reduced and reclaimed many, and excited and animated the magistrates in their respective districts to put the laws in execution. It is said, she dwelt, or as some read it, she sat under a palm-tree, called ever after from her the palm-tree of Deborah. Either she had her house under that tree, a mean habitation which would couch under a tree; or she had her judgment-seat in the open air, under the shadow of that tree, which was an emblem of the justice she sat there to administer, which will thrive and grow against opposition, as palms under pressures. Josephus saith that the children of Israel came to Deborah to desire her to pray to God for them that they might be delivered out of the hand of Jabin; and Samuel is said at one particular time to judge Israel in Mizpeh, *i. e.* bring them back again to God, when they made the same address to him upon a like occasion, *1 Sam. vii. 6, 8.*

2. The project laid for their deliverance. When the children of Israel came to her for judgment, with her they found salvation; so they that seek to God for grace, shall have grace and peace, grace and comfort, grace and glory. She was not her self fit to command an army in person, being a woman, but she nominates one that was fit, Barak of Naphtali, who, it is probable, had already signalized himself in some rencounters with the forces of the oppressor, living near him (for Nazer and Harosheth lay within the lot of that tribe) and thereby had gained a reputation and interest among his people. Some struggles, we may suppose, that that brave man had used towards the shaking off of the yoke, but could not effect it, till he had his commission and instructions from Deborah. He could do nothing without her head, nor she without his hands, but both together made a compleat deliverer, and effected a compleat deliverance. The greatest and best are not self-sufficient, but need one another.

1. By God's direction, she orders Barak to raise an army, and engage Jabin's forces, that were under Sisera's command, *ver. 6, 7.* Barak, it may be, had been meditating some great attempt against the common enemy, a spark of generous fire was glowing in his breast, and fain he would do something to purpose for his people, and for the cities of his God. But two things discouraged him: (1.) He wanted a commission to levy forces; that therefore Deborah here gives him under the broad-seal of heaven, which, as a prophetess, she had warrant to affix to it. *Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded it?* Yes, certainly he has, take my word for it; some think she intends this as an appeal to Barak's own heart, has not God by a secret whisper to thy self, given thee some intimation of his purpose, to make use of thee as an instrument in his hand to save Israel? Hast not thou felt some impulse of this kind upon thine own spirit? If so, the spirit of prophecy in Deborah, confirms the spirit of a soldier in Barak, *Go, and draw towards mount Tabor.* She directs him what number of men to raise, ten thousand, and let him not fear that those will be too few, when God hath said, he will by them save Israel: Whence he should raise them, only out of his own tribe, and that of Zebulun next adjoining; those two countries should furnish him with an army sufficient, he need not stay to go further. And lastly, she orders him where to make his rendezvous, at mount Tabor, in his own neighbourhood. (2.) When he had an army raised, he knew not how he should have an opportunity of engaging the enemy, who, perhaps declined fighting, having heard that Israel, if they had but courage enough to make head against an enemy, seldom failed of success. Well, saith Deborah, in the name of God, *I will draw unto thee Sisera and his army.* She assures him that the matter should be determined by one pitched battle, and should not be long in the doing. 1. In mentioning the power of the enemy, Sisera, a celebrated general, bold and experienced, his chariots, his iron chariots, and his multitude of soldiers, she obliges Barak to fortify himself with the utmost degree of resolution,

lution, for the enemy he was to engage was a very formidable one; it is good to know the worst, that we may provide accordingly. But, (2.) In fixing the very place to which Sisera would draw his army, she gave him a sign, which might help to confirm his faith when he came to engage. It was a contingent thing, and depended upon Sisera's own will, but when afterwards he should see that falling out just as Deborah had foretold, he might from thence infer, that certainly in the rest she said she spake under a divine direction, which would be a great encouragement to him, especially because with this, 3. She gave him an express promise of success, *I will* (i. e. God will, in whose name I speak) *deliver them into thy hand*: So that when he saw them drawn up against him, according to Deborah's word, he might be confident, that according to her word he should soon see them fallen before him. Observe, *God draws them to him*, only that he might deliver them into his hands; when Sisera drew his forces together, he designed the destruction of Israel, but God gathered them as sheaves into the floor, for their own destruction, *Mic. iv. 11, 12. Assemble your selves, and you shall be broken to pieces, Isa. viii. 9. See Rev. xix. 17, 18.*

2. At Barak's request, she promiseth to go along with him to the field of battle. (1.) Barak insists much upon the necessity of her presence, which would be to him better than a council of war, *ver. 8. If thou wilt go with me to direct and advise me, and in every difficult case to let me know God's mind, then I will go with all my heart, and not fear the chariots of iron, otherwise not.* Some make this to be the language of a weak faith, he could not take her word, unless he had her with him in pawn, as it were for performance; it seems rather to arise from a conviction of the necessity of God's presence, and continual conduct, a pledge and earnest of which he would reckon Deborah's presence to be, and therefore begged thus earnestly for it. *If thou go not up with me, in token of God's going with me, carry me not up hence.* Nothing would be a greater satisfaction to him, than to have the prophets with him to animate his soldiers, and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions. (2.) Deborah promiseth to go with him, *ver. 9.* No toil nor peril shall discourage her from doing the utmost that becomes her to do for the service of her country. She would not send him where she would not go herself. Those that in God's name call others to their duty, should be very ready to assist them in it. Deborah was the weaker vessel, yet had the stronger faith. But tho' she agrees to go with Barak, if he insist upon it, she gives him a hint proper enough to move a soldier not to insist upon it; *the journey thou undertakest* (so confident was she of the success, that she calls his engaging in war but the undertaking of a journey) *shall not be for thine honour, not so much for thine honour as if thou hadst gone thyself, for the Lord shall sell Sisera* (now his turn comes to be sold as Israel was, *ver. 2.* by way of reprisal) *into the hands of a woman, i. e. 1. The world would ascribe the victory to the hand of Deborah; this he might himself foresee. 2. God (to correct his weakness) would compleat the victory by the hand of Jael, which would be some eclipse to his glory. But Barak values the satisfaction of his mind, and the good success of his enterprize, more than his honour, and therefore will by no means drop his request; he dares not fight unless he have Deborah with him to direct him, and pray for him; she therefore stood to her word with a masculine courage, this noble heroine arose and went with Barak.*

10. ¶ And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him. 11. Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh. 12. And they shewed Sisera, that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river of Kishon. 14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? so Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. 15. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword, before Barak: so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. 16. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles, and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword, and there was not a man left.

Here, 1. Barak beats for volunteers, and soon has his quota of men ready, *ver. 10.* Deborah had appointed to raise an army of ten thousand men, *ver. 6.* and so many he has presently at his feet, following him, and subject to his command; God is

said to call us to his feet, *Isa. xli. 2. i. e.* into obedience to him. Some think it intimates that they were all footmen, and so the armies of the Jews generally were, which made the disproportion of strength between them, and the enemy (who had horses and chariots) very great, and the victory the more illustrious; but the presence of God and his prophets was abundantly sufficient to balance that disproportion. Barak has his men at his feet, which intimates their cheerfulness and readiness to attend him, *whithersoever he went, Rev. xiv. 4.* Tho' the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were chiefly depended on, yet it appears by Deborah's song, that there were some come in to him from other tribes, Manasseh and Issachar, and more were expected that came not, from Reuben, Dan and Asher, *chap. v. 14—17.* But these are overlooked here, and we are only told, that to make his ten thousand effective men indeed, *Deborah went up with him.* The 11th verse, concerning the remove of Heber, one of the families of the Kenites, out of the wilderness of Judah, in the south, where those families had fixed themselves, *chap. i. 16.* into the northern country, comes in for the sake of what was to follow concerning the exploit of Jael, a wife of that family.

2. Sisera, upon notice of Barak's motions, takes the field with a very numerous and powerful army, *ver. 12, 13.* They shewed Sisera, i. e. it was shewed him. Yet some think it to refer to the Kenites, mentioned immediately before, *ver. 11.* They gave Sisera notice of Barak's rendezvous, there being peace at this time between Jabin and that family, *ver. 17.* Whether they intended it as a kindness to him or no, it served to accomplish what God had said by Deborah, *ver. 7. I will draw unto thee Sisera.* Sisera's confidence was chiefly in his chariots, therefore particular notice is taken of them, *nine hundred chariots of iron*, which, with the scythes fastened to their axle-trees, when they were driven into an army of footmen, did terrible execution. So ingenious have men been in inventing methods of destroying one another, to gratify those lusts, *from which comes wars and fightings.*

3. Deborah gives orders to engage the enemy, *ver. 14.* Josephus saith, that when Barak saw Sisera's army drawn up, and attempting to surround the mountain, on the top of which he and his forces were encamped, his heart quite failed him, and he determined to retire to a place of greater safety; but Deborah animated him to make a descent upon Sisera, assuring him that this was the day marked out in the divine counsels for his defeat. Now they appear most threatening, they are ripe for ruin. The thing is as sure to be done, as if it were done already, *the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand.* See how the work and honour of this great action is divided between Deborah and Barak, she, as the head, gives the word, he, as the hand, doth the work: Thus doth God dispense his gifts variously, *1 Cor. xii. 4, &c.* But tho' ordinarily the head of the woman is the man, *1 Cor. xi. 2.* here he that has the residue of the Spirit was pleased to cross hands, and to put the head upon the woman's shoulders, chusing the weak things of the world to shame the mighty, that no flesh might glory in his presence. It was well for Barak that he had Deborah with him, for she made up what was defective, (1.) In his conduct, by telling him *this is the day.* (2.) In his courage, by assuring him of God's presence, *is not the Lord gone out before thee?* Darest thou not follow, when thou hast God himself for thy leader? Note, 1. In every undertaking it is good to be satisfied that God goes before us, that we are in the way of our duty, and under his direction. 2. If we have ground to hope that God goes before us, we ought to go on with courage and cheerfulness. Be not dismayed at the difficulties thou meetest with in resisting Satan, in serving God, or suffering for him, for *is not the Lord gone out before thee?* Follow him fully then.

4. God himself routs the enemy's army, *ver. 15.* Barak, in obedience to Deborah's orders, went down into the valley, tho' there upon the plain the iron chariots would have so much the more advantage against him, quitting his fastnesses upon the mountain in dependence upon the divine power, for *in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains, in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people, Jer. iii. 23.* And he was not deceived in his confidence, *the Lord discomfited Sisera.* It was not so much the bold and surprizing alarm which Barak gave their camp, that dispirited and dispersed them, but God's terror seized their spirits, and put them into an unaccountable confusion. The stars, it seems, fought against them, *chap. v. 20.* Josephus saith, that a violent storm of hail which beat in their faces gave them this rout, disabled them, and drove them back, so that they became a very easy prey to the army of Israel, and Deborah's words were made good, *the Lord has delivered them into thy hand*, it is now in thy power to do what thou wilt with them.

5. Barak bravely improves his advantages, follows the blow with an undaunted resolution, and an unwearied diligence, prosecutes the victory, and pursues the scattered forces, even to their general's head-quarters at Harosheth, *ver. 16.* and spares none whom God had delivered into his hand to be destroyed, *there was not a man left.* When God goes before us in our spiritual conflicts, we must bestir our selves, and when by his grace he gives us some success against the enemies of our souls, we must improve it by watchfulness and resolution, and carry on the holy war with vigour.

17. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Habor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18. ¶ And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me, fear not: and when he had turned in unto her, into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink, for I am thirsty: and she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. 21. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: (for he was fast asleep, and weary) so he died. 22. And behold as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

We have seen the army of the Canaanites totally routed, it is said, *Psal.* lxxxiii. 9, 10. (where the defeat of this army is pleaded as a precedent for God's doing the like in after-times) that they became *as dung for the earth*. Now here we have,

(1.) The fall of their general. Sisera, captain of the host, in whom, it is likely, Jabin their king put an entire confidence, and therefore was not himself present in the action. Let us trace the steps of this mighty man's fall.

1. He quitted his chariot, and took to his feet, *ver.* 15, 17. His chariots had been his pride and his confidence, and we may suppose he had therefore despised and defied the armies of the living God, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had; justly therefore is he thus made ashamed of his confidence; and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy when he is got clear of his chariot, tho' we may well suppose it the best made, and best drawn, of any of them. Thus are they disappointed who rest on the creature, like a broken reed, it not only breaks under them, but runs into their hand, and pierceth them with many sorrows. The idol may quickly become a burthen, *Isa.* xlvi. 1. and what we were sick for, God can make us sick of. How sneakingly doth Sisera look now he is dismounted! it is hard to say whether he blusheth or trembleth more: Put not your trust in princes, if they may so soon be brought to this; if he, who but lately trusted to his arms with so much assurance, must now trust to his heels only with so little.

2. He fled for shelter to the tents of the Kenites, having no strong hold, nor any place of his own in reach to retire to; the mean and solitary way of the Kenites living perhaps he had formerly despised and ridiculed, and the more, because religion was kept up among them; yet now he is glad to put himself under the protection of one of these tents. And he chuseth the wife's tent, or apartment, either because less suspected, or because it happened to be next him, and the first he came to, *ver.* 17. And that which encouraged him to go thither, was, that at this time there was peace between his master, and the house of Heber. Not that there was any league offensive and defensive between them, only at present there was no indications of hostility. Jabin did them no harm, did not oppress them as he did the Israelites, their plain, quiet, harmless, way of living, make them not suspected or feared, and perhaps, God so ordering it as a recompence for their constant adherence to the true religion; Sisera thought he might therefore be safe among them, not considering that tho' they themselves suffered not by Jabin's power, they heartily sympathized with the Israel of God that did.

3. Jael invited him in, and bid him very welcome. Probably she stood at her tent door to enquire what news from the army, and what the success of the battle was which was fought, not far off. (1.) She invited him in. Perhaps she stood waiting for an opportunity to shew kindness to any distressed Israelite, if there should have been occasion for it; but seeing Sisera come in great haste, panting, and out of breath, she invited him to come and repose himself in her tent, in which, while she seemed to design the relieving of his fatigue, perhaps she really intended the retarding of his flight, that he might fall into the hands of Barak, who was now in a hot chase of him, (*ver.* 18.) and it may well be questioned, whether she had at first any thought of taking away his life, but rather that God afterwards put it into her heart. 2.) She made very much of him, and seemed mighty careful to

have him easy, as her invited guest. Was he weary? she finds him a very convenient place to repose himself in, and recruit his strength? Was he thirsty? Well he might. Did he want a little water to cool his tongue? The best liquor her tent afforded was at his service, and that was milk, *ver.* 19. which, we may suppose, he drank heartily of, and being refreshed with it, was the better disposed to sleep. Was he cold, or afraid of catching cold, or did he desire to be hid from the pursuers, if they should search that tent? She covered him with a mantle, *ver.* 18. All expressions of her care for his safety. Only when he desired her to tell a lie for him, and to say he was not there, she declined making any such promise, *ver.* 20. We must not sin against God, no, not to oblige those we would shew ourselves most observant of. Lastly, We must suppose she kept her tent as quiet as she could, and free from noise, that he might sleep the sooner and the faster. And now was Sisera least safe, when he was most secure. How uncertain and precarious is human life, and what assurance can we have of it, when it may so easily be betrayed by those with whom it is trusted, and they may prove its destroyers, who, we hoped, would have been its protectors. It is best making God our friend, for he will not deceive us.

4. When he lay fast asleep, she drove a long nail through his temples, so fastened his head to the ground, and killed him, *ver.* 21. And tho' this was enough to do his business, yet to make sure work (if we translate it right, *chap.* v. 26.) she cut off his head, and left it nailed there. Whether she designed this or no, when she invited him into her tent, doth not appear, probably the thought was darted into her mind, when she saw him lie so fair to receive such a fatal blow; and, doubtless, the thought brought with it evidence sufficient, that it came not from Satan as a murderer and destroyer, but from God as a righteous judge and avenger; so much of brightness and heavenly light did she perceive in the inducements to it that offered themselves, the honour of God, and the deliverance of Israel, and nothing of the blackness of malice, hatred, or personal revenge. (1.) It was a divine power that enabled her to do it, and inspired her with more than a manly courage; what if her hand should shake, and she should miss her blow! What if he should awake when she was attempting it? Or suppose some of his own attendants should follow him, and surprize her in the fact, how dearly would she and all her's be made to pay for it? Yet obtaining help of God, she doth it effectually. (2.) It was a divine warrant that justified her in the doing of it; and therefore since no such extraordinary commissions can now be pretended, it ought not in any case to be imitated. The laws of friendship and hospitality must be religiously observed, and we must abhor the thought of betraying any whom we have invited and encouraged to put a confidence in us. And as to this fact of Jael's (like that of Ehud's in the chapter before) we have reason to think she was conscious of such a divine impulse upon her spirit to do it, as did abundantly satisfy herself (and it ought therefore to satisfy us) that it was well done. God's judgments are a great deep. The instrument of this execution was a nail of the tent, *i. e.* one of the great pins with which the tent, or the stakes of it were fastened. They often removing their tents, she had been used to drive these nails, and therefore knew how to do it the more dextrously on this great occasion. He that had thought to have destroyed Israel with his many iron chariots, is himself destroyed with one iron nail: thus do the weak things of the world confound the mighty. See here Jael's glory, and Sisera's shame. That great commander dies, (1.) In his sleep, fast asleep and weary. It comes in as a reason, why he stirred not to make any resistance; so fettered was he in the chains of sleep, that he could not find his hands; thus the stout-hearted are spoiled, *at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they are cast into a dead sleep*, and so are made to sleep their last, *Psal.* lxxvi. 5, 6. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, for when he sleeps, where is it? It is weak, and he can do nothing, a child may insult him then, and steal his life from him, and yet if he sleep not, he is soon spent and weary, and can do nothing neither. These words which we here put in a parenthesis (*for he was weary*) all the ancient versions read otherwise, he struggled (or sprinted, as we say) and died. So the Syriac and Arabic, *exagitans sese mortuus est*. He fainted and died. So the Chaldee, He was darkened and died. So the LXX, *confocians morte soporem*, so the vulgar Latin, joining sleep and death together, seeing they are so near a-kin, he fainted and died. He dies, (2.) With his head nailed to the ground, an emblem of his earthly-mindedness. *O curvæ in terram animæ!* His ear (saith bishop Hall) was fastened so close to the earth, as if his body had been lifting what was become of his soul. He dies, (3.) By the hand of a woman. This added to the shame of his death before men, and had he but known it as Abimelech did, *Judg.* ix. 54. we may well imagine how much it would have added to the vexation of his own heart.

(2.) Here is the glory and joy of Israel hereupon.

1. Barak their leader finds his enemy dead, *ver.* 22. and very well pleased, no doubt, he was to find his work done so well to his hands, and so much to the glory of God, and the confusion of his enemies. Had he stood too nicely upon a point of honour, he would have repented it as an affront to have the general slain by any hand but his; but now he remembered that this diminution of his honour he was sentenced to undergo for insisting upon Deborah's

going with him; *the Lord shall sell Sifera into the hand of a woman*, tho' then it was little thought the prediction would have been fulfilled in such a way as this.

2. Israel is compleatly delivered out of the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, *ver. 23, 24.* They not only shook off his yoke by this day's victory, but they afterwards prosecuted the war against him, till they had destroyed him, he and his nation being by the divine appointment devoted to ruin, and not to be spared. The Israelites having soundly smarted for their foolish pity in not doing it before, resolve now it is in their power, to indulge them no longer, but to make a thorough riddance of them, as a people to whom to shew mercy, was as contrary to their own interest as it was to God's command. And, probably, it is with an eye to the sentence they were under, that this enemy is named three times here in these two last verses, and called king of Canaan, for as such he was to be destroyed, and so thoroughly was he destroyed, that I do not remember to read of the kings of Canaan any more after this. The children of Israel had prevented a great deal of mischief, if they had sooner destroyed these Canaanites, as God had both commanded and enabled them, but better be wise late, and buy it by experience, than never wise.

CHAP. V.

This chapter is the triumphant song which was composed, and sung upon occasion of that glorious victory which Israel obtained over the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, and the happy consequences of that victory. Probably, it was usual then to publish poems upon such occasions, as now, but this only is preserved of all the poems of that age of the Judges, because dictated by Deborah a prophetess, designed for a psalm of praise then, and a pattern of praise to after-ages, and it gives a great deal of light to the history of those times. (1.) It begins with praise to God, ver. 2, 3. (2.) The substance of this song transmits the memory of this great achievement. 1. Comparing God's appearances for them on this occasion, with his appearances to them on mount Sinai, ver. 4, 5. 2. Magnifying their deliverance from the consideration of the calamitous condition they had been in, ver. 6, 7, 8. 3. Calling those to join in praise that shared in the benefits of the success, ver. 9—13. 4. Reflecting honour upon those tribes that were forward and active in that war, and disgrace on those that declined the service, ver. 14—19, 23. 5. Taking notice how God himself fought for them, ver. 20—22. 6. Celebrating particularly the honour of Jael, that slew Sifera, on which head the song is very large, ver. 24—30. (3.) It concludes with a prayer to God, ver. 31.

1. **T**HEN sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, 2. Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. 3. Hear, O ye kings, give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I will sing unto the LORD, I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel. 4. LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. 5. The mountains melted from before the LORD, *even* that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

The former chapter let us know what great things God had done for Israel, in this we have the thankful returns they made to God, that all ages of the church might learn (that work of heaven) to praise God.

1. God is praised by a song. Which is, (1.) A very natural expression of rejoicing; is any merry? *let him sing*, and holy joy is the very soul and root of praise and thanksgiving. God is pleased to reckon himself glorified by our joy in him, and in his wondrous works. His servants joy is his delight, and their songs melody to him. (2.) A very proper expedient for spreading the knowledge, and perpetuating the remembrance of great events. Neighbours would learn this song one of another, and children of their parents, and by that means, they who had not books, or could not read, yet would be made acquainted with these works of God. And *one generation* would thus praise God's works to another, and declare his mighty acts, *Psal. cxlv. 4, &c.*

2. Deborah herself penned this song, as appears by *ver. 7. Till that I, Deborah arose.* And the first words should be rendred, *then she sang, even Deborah.* She used her gifts as a prophetess, in composing the song, and the strain is throughout very fine and lofty, the images lively, the expressions elegant, and an admirable mixture there is in it of sweetness and majesty; no poetry is comparable to the sacred poetry. And we may suppose she used her power as a princess, in obliging the conquering army of Israel to learn and sing this song. She expects not that they should by their poems celebrate her praises, and magnify her, but requires, that in this poem they should join with her in celebrating God's praises, and magnifying him. She had been the first wheel in the action, and now is so in the thanksgiving.

3. It was sung on that day, not the very day that the fight was, but on that occasion, and soon after, as soon as a thanksgiving day could conveniently be appointed. When we have received mercy from God, we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, while the impressions of the mercy are fresh. It is rent to be paid at the day.

1. She begins with a general hallelujah; *praise* (or blest, for that is the word) *ye the Lord*, *ver. 2.* The design of her song is to give glory to God, that therefore is put first to direct and explain all that follows, like the first petition of the Lord's prayer, *hallowed be thy name.* Two things God is here praised for. (1.) The vengeance he took on Israel's enemies, for the avenging of Israel upon their proud and cruel oppressors, recompensing into their bosoms all the injuries they had done to his people. *The Lord is known* as a righteous God, and the God to whom vengeance belongs, by the judgments which he executeth. (2.) The grace he gave to Israel's friends; *when the people willingly offered themselves* to serve in this war. God is to have the glory of all the good offices that are at any time done us, and the more willingly they are done, the more is to be observed of that grace, which gives both to will and to do. For these two things she resolves to leave this song upon record, to the honour of the everlasting God, *ver. 3. I, even I will sing unto the Lord, Jehovah*, that God of incontestible sovereignty, and irresistible power, *even to the Lord God of Israel*, who governs all for the good of the church.

2. She calls to the great ones of the world that sit at the upper end of its table to attend to her song, and take notice of the subject of it. *Hear, O ye kings, give ear, O ye princes.* (1.) She would have them know, that as great and as high as they were, there is one above them, with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is their interest to submit. That horses and chariots are vain things for safety. (2.) She would have them to join with her in praising the God of Israel, and no longer to praise their counterfeit deities, as Belshazzar did, *Dan. v. 4. He praised the gods of gold and silver.* She bespeaks them as the Psalmist, *Psal. ii. 10, 11. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, serve the Lord with fear.* (3.) She would have them take warning by Sifera's fate, and not dare to offer any injury to the people of God, whose cause, sooner or later, God will plead with jealousy.

3. She looks back upon God's former appearances, and compares this with them, the more to magnify the glorious author of this great salvation. What God is doing, should bring to our mind what he has done, for he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, *ver. 4. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir.* This may be understood, either, 1. Of the appearances of God's power and justice against the enemies of Israel to subdue and conquer them, and so, *Hab. iii. 3, 4, &c.* is parallel to it, where the destruction of the church's enemies is thus described. When God had led his people Israel from the country of Edom, he brought down under their feet, Sihon and Og, striking them and their armies with such terror and amazement, that they seemed apprehensive heaven and earth were coming together. Their hearts melted as if all the world had been melting round about them. Or it notes the glorious displays of the divine majesty, and the surprising efforts of the divine power, enough to make the earth tremble, the heavens drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt, compare *Psal. xviii. 7.* God's counsels are so far from being hindered by any creature, that when the time of their accomplishment comes, that which seemed to stand in their way, will not only yield before them, but be made to serve them. See *Isa. lxiv. 1, 2.* Or, 2. It is meant of the appearances of God's glory and majesty to Israel, when he gave them his law at mount Sinai. It was then literally true the *earth trembled*, and the *heavens dropped*, &c. Compare *Deut. xxxiii. 2. Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8.* Let all the kings and princes know that this is the God whom Deborah praiseth, and not such mean and impotent deities as they paid their homage to. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the giving of the law, but has a strange descant on those words, *the mountains melted.* The mountains, *Tabor, Hermon, and Carmel, contended among themselves, one said, let the divine majesty dwell upon me, the other said, let it dwell upon me; but God made it to dwell upon mount Sinai, the meanest and least of all the mountains,* I suppose it means the least valuable, because barren and rocky.

6. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. 7. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel. 8. They chose new gods: then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? 9. My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye the LORD. 10. Speak ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. 11. They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water; there shall they rehear

hearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *towards the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

Here, 1. Deborah describes the distressed state of Israel, under the tyranny of Jabin, that the greatness of their trouble might make their salvation appear the more illustrious, and the more gracious, *ver. 6.* From the days of Shamgar, who did something towards the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, to the days of Jael, the present day, in which Jael has so signalized herself, the country has been in a manner desolate. 1. No trade, for want of soldiers to protect men of business in their business from the incursions of the enemy, and for want of magistrates to restrain and punish thieves and robbers among themselves, men of broken fortunes, and desperate spirits, that having no employment, took to rob on the high-road, all commerce ceased, and the highways were unoccupied; no caravans of merchants, as formerly. 2. No travelling. Whereas in times when there was some order and government, the travellers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to the by-ways; now on the contrary the robbers insulted the open roads without check, and the honest travellers were obliged to sculk, and walk through by-ways, in continual frights. (3.) No tillage. The fields must needs be laid waste and unoccupied, when the inhabitants of the villages, the country farmers, ceased their employments, quitted their houses, which were continually alarmed and plundered by the rapparees, and were obliged to take shelter for themselves and their families in walled and fenced cities. (4.) No administration of justice. There was war in the gates, where their courts were kept, *ver. 8.* So that it was not till this salvation was wrought, that the people of the Lord durst go down to the gates, *ver. 11.* The continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrates of the dignity, and the people of the benefit of their government. (5.) No peace to him that went out, or to him that came in. The gates through which they passed and repassed, were infested by the enemy, nay, the places of drawing water were alarmed by the archers; a mighty achievement, to terrify the drawers of water. (6.) Neither arms nor spirit to help themselves with, not a shield or spear seen among forty thousand, *ver. 8.* Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that tho' they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but were thrown by, and suffered to rust, they having neither skill nor will to use them.

2. She shews in one word what it was that brought all this misery upon them, *they chose new gods*, *ver. 8.* It was their idolatry that provoked God to give them up thus into the hands of their enemies. The Lord their God was one Lord, but that would not content them, they must have more, many more, still more. Their God was the ancient of days, still the same, and therefore they grew weary of him, and must have new gods, which they were as fond of as children of new clothes; names newly invented, heroes newly canonized. Their fathers, when put to their choice, chose the Lord for their God, *Jos. xxiv. 21.* But they would not abide by that choice, they must have gods of their own chusing.

3. She takes notice of God's great goodness to Israel, in raising up such as should redress their grievances. Her self first, *ver. 7.* till that I Deborah arose, to restrain and punish those who disturbed the publick peace, and protect men in their business, and then the face of things was changed for the better presently; those beasts of prey retired upon the breaking forth of this joyful light, and man went forth again to his work and labour; *Psal. civ. 22.* 23. Thus she became a mother in Israel, a nursing mother, such was the affection she bore to her people, and such the care and pains she took for the publick welfare. Under her there were other governors of Israel, (*ver. 9.*) who like her had done their part as governors to reform the people, and then like her offered themselves willingly to serve in the war, not insisting upon the exemption which their dignity and office entitled them to, when they had so fair an opportunity of appearing in their country's cause, and, no doubt, the example of the governors influenced the people in like manner, *willingly to offer themselves*, *ver. 2.* Of these governors, she saith, *my heart is toward them*, i. e. I truly love and honour them, they have won my heart for ever, I shall never forget them. Note, Those are worthy of double honour that recede voluntarily from the demands of their honour to serve God and his church.

4. She calls upon those who had a particular share in the advantages of this great salvation, to offer up particular thanks to God for it, *ver. 10. 11.* Let every man speak as he found of the goodness of God in this happy change of the posture of publick affairs. (1.) *Ye that ride on white asses*, i. e. the nobility and gentry. Horses were little used in that country, they had, it is likely, a much better breed of asses than we have; but persons of quality, it seems, were distinguished by the colour of the asses they rode on, the white being more rare, were therefore more valued. Notice is taken of Abdon's sons and grandsons riding on ass-colts, as speaking them men of distinction, *Judg. xii. 14.* Let such who are by this salvation restored, not only to their liberty as other Israelites, but to their dignity, speak God's praises. (2.) Let them that sit in judgment

be sensible of it, and thankful for it, as a very great mercy that they may sit safely there, that the sword of justice is not struck out of their hand by the sword of war. (3.) Let them that walk by the way, and meet with none there to make them afraid, speak to themselves in pious meditations, and to their fellow-travellers in religious discourses of the goodness of God in ridding the roads of those Banditti that had so long infested them. (4.) Let them that draw water in peace, and have not their wells taken from them, or stopped up, nor are in danger of being caught by the enemy, when they go forth to draw, there where they find themselves so much more safe and easy than they have been, *there let them rehearse the acts of the Lord*, not Deborah's acts, or Barak's, but the Lord's, taking notice of his hand making peace in our borders, and creating a defence upon all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. Observe in these acts of his, 1. Justice executed on his daring enemies. They are the righteous acts of the Lord. See him pleading a righteous cause, and sitting in the throne, judging aright, and give him glory as the Judge of all the earth. 2. Kindness shewed to his trembling people, the inhabitants of the villages, who lay most open to the enemy, had suffered most, and were most in danger, (*Ezek. xxxviii. 11.*) It is the glory of God to protect those that are most exposed, and to help the weakest. Let us all take notice of the share, we in particular have in the publick peace and tranquillity, the inhabitants of the villages especially, and to give God the praise of it.

12. Awake, awake Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. 13. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty. 14. Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee Benjamin, among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. 15. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah: even Issachar, and also Barak, he was sent on foot into the valley: for the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. 16. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. 18. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardied their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field. 19. The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no gain of money. 20. They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. 21. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon: O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. 22. Then were the horse-hoofs broken, by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones. 23. Curse ye Meroz, (said the angel of the LORD) curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

Here, 1. Deborah stirs up her self and Barak to celebrate this victory, in the most solemn manner, to the glory of God, and the honour of Israel, for the encouragement of their friends, and the greater confusion of their enemies, *ver. 12.* (1.) Deborah, as a prophetess, must do it by a song, to compose and sing which she excites her self, *awake, awake*, and again, *awake, awake*. Which speaks the sense she had of the excellency and difficulty of the work, it needed, and well deserved, the utmost liveliness and vigour of soul in the performance of it; all the powers and faculties of the soul in their closest intention and application, ought to be employed in it: also the sense she had of her own infirmity, and aptness to flag, and remit of her zeal in this work. Note, Praising God is work that we should awake to, and awake our selves to, *Psal. cviii. 2.* (2.) Barak, as a general, must do it by a triumph, *lead thy captivity captive*. Tho' the army of Sisera was cut off in the field, and no quarter given, yet we may suppose in the prosecution of the victory, when the war was carried into the enemies country, many not found in arms were seized and made prisoners of war, these she would have led in chains after Barak, when he made his publick entry into his own city to grace his triumphs, not as if it should be any pleasure to him to trample upon his fellow creatures, but thus he must give glory to God, and serve that good purpose of his government, which is to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them.

2. She gives good reason for this praise and triumph; *ver. 13.* This glorious victory had made the remnant of Israel, and Deborah in particular, look very great, and God himself by it had done it. (1.) Israel was become few, and inconsiderable, and yet to them God

God gave dominion over nobles. Many of them were cut off by the enemy, many died of grief, and perhaps some had removed their families and effects into foreign parts; and yet those few that remained by divine assistance, with one brave and generous effort, not only shook off the yoke of oppression from their own neck, but got power over their oppressors. As long as any of God's Israel remain, (and a remnant God will have in the worst of times) there is hopes, be it never so small a remnant, for God can make him that remaineth; tho' it should be but one single person, triumph over the most proud and potent. (2.) Deborah was her self of the weaker sex, and the sex that from the fall had been sentenced to subjection, and yet the Lord that is himself higher than the highest, authorized her to rule over the mighty men of Israel, who willingly submitted to her conduct; and enabled her to triumph over the mighty men of Canaan, who fell before the army she commanded; so wonderfully did he *advance the low estate of his handmaid*. The Lord made me, a woman, have dominion over mighty men. A despised stone made *head of the corner*, *This is indeed the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes*.

3. She makes particular remarks on the several parties concerned in this great action, taking notice who fought against them, who fought for them, and who stood neuter.

1. Who fought against them. The power of the enemy must be taken notice of, that the victory may appear the more glorious. Jabin and Sisera had been mentioned in the history, but here it appears further. 1. That Amalek was in league with Jabin, and sent him in assistance, or endeavoured to do it. Ephraim is here said to act against Amalek, *ver. 14.* probably intercepting and cutting off some forces of the Amalakites that were upon their march to join Sisera. Amalek had helped Moab to oppress Israel, *chap. iii. 13.* and now Jabin, they were inveterate enemies to God's people, whose hand had always *been against the throne of the Lord*, *Exod. xvii. 16.* and therefore the more dangerous. 2. That others of the kings of Canaan, who had somewhat recovered themselves since their defeat by Joshua, joined with Jabin, and strengthened his army with their forces, having the same implacable enmity to Israel, that he had, and those kingdoms when they were in their strength, having been subject to that of Hazor, *Josh. xi. 10.* These kings *came and fought*, *ver. 19.* Israel had no king, their enemies had many, whose power and influence, especially acting in confederacy, made them very formidable; and yet Israel having the Lord for their king, was too hard for them all. It is said of these kings they took no gain of money, they were not mercenary troops, hired into the service of Jabin, such oft fail in an extremity, but they were volunteers, and hearty in the cause against Israel. *Desired not the riches of silver*, so the Chaldee, but only the satisfaction of helping to ruin Israel. Acting upon this principle they were the more formidable, and would be the more cruel.

2. Who fought for them. The several tribes that assisted in this great exploit, are here spoken of with honour, for tho' God is chiefly to be glorified, instruments must have their due praise, for the encouragement of others; but after all it was heaven that turned the scale.

1. Ephraim and Benjamin, those tribes among whom Deborah her self lived, bestirred themselves, and did bravely, by her influence upon them; for her palm-tree was in the tribe of Ephraim, and very near to that of Benjamin, *ver. 14.* *Out of Ephraim was there a root*, and life in the root against Amalek. There was in Ephraim, a mountain called the mount of Amalek, mentioned *Judg. xii. 15.* which some think is here meant, and some read it, there was a root in Amalek, *i. e.* in that mountain, a strong resolution in the minds of that people to make head against the oppressors, which was *the root of the matter*. Herein Benjamin had set them a good example, among his people; Ephraim moved after thee Benjamin; tho' Benjamin was the junior tribe, and much inferior, especially at this time, to Ephraim, both in number and wealth, yet when they led, Ephraim followed in appearing for the common cause. If we be not so bold as to lead, yet we must not be so proud and fullen as not to follow even our inferiors in a good work. Ephraim was at a distance from the place of action, and therefore could not send forth many of its boughs to the service, but Deborah, who was one of them, knew there was a root of them, that they were hearty well-wishers to the cause. Dr Lightfoot gives quite another sense of this, Joshua of Ephraim had been a root of such victories against Amalek, *Exod. xvii.* and Ehud of Benjamin lately against Amalek and Moab.

2. The ice being broke by Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir (the half-tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan) and Zebulun sent in men that were very serviceable to this great design. When an army is to be raised, especially upon such disadvantages as Barak was now under by the long disuse of arms, and the dispiritedness of the people, it is of great consequence to be furnished (1.) With men of courage for officers, and such the family of Machir furnished them with, for thence came down governors. The children of Machir were particularly famous for their valour in Moses's time, *Numb. xxxii. 39.* and it seems it continued in their family, the more because they were seated in the frontiers. (2.) With men of learning and ingenuity for secretaries of war, and with such they were supplied out of Zebulun, thence came men *that handle the pen of the writer*, clerks that issued out orders, wrote circular let-

ters, drew commissions, mustered their men, and kept their accounts. Thus must every man *according as he has received the gift, minister the same*, for the publick good, *1 Pet. iv. 10.* the eye see and the ear hear for the whole body. I know it is generally understood of the forwardness even of the scholars of this tribe, who studied the law, and expounded it; to take up arms in this cause, tho' they were better skilled in books than in the art of war. So Sir Richard Blackmore paraphraseth it;

*The scribes of Zebulun and learned men
To wield the sword, laid down the pen.*

3. Issachar did good service too; tho' he *saw that rest was good*, and therefore *bowed his shoulder to bear*, which is the character of that tribe, *Gen. xlix. 15.* yet they disdained to bear the yoke of Jabin's tribute, and now preferred the generous toils of war, before a servile rest. Tho' it should seem there were not many common soldiers lifted out of that tribe; yet *the princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak*, *ver. 15.* probably as a great council of war to advise upon emergencies. And it should seem these princes of Issachar did in person accompany Barak into the field of battle. Did he go on foot? they footed it with him, not consulting their honour or ease; did he go into the valley? the place of most danger, they exposed themselves with him, and were still at his right-hand to advise him, for the men of Issachar were men that *had understanding of the times*, *1 Chron. xii. 32.*

4. Zebulun and Naphtali were the most bold and active of all the tribes, not only out of a particular affection to Barak their countryman, but because they lying nearest to Jabin, the yoke of oppression lay heavier on their necks than on any other. Better die in honour than live in bondage, and therefore in a pious zeal for God and their country, they *jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field*, *ver. 18.* with what heroick bravery did they charge and push on, even upon the chariots of iron, despising danger, and setting death it self at defiance in so good a cause.

5. The stars from heaven appeared, or acted at least, on Israel's side, *ver. 20.* *The stars in their courses*, according to the order and direction of him who is the great Lord of their hosts, *fought against Sisera*, by their malignant influences; or by causing the storms of hail and thunder, which contributed so much to the rout of Sisera's army. The Chaldee reads it *from heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera*, *i. e.* The power of the God of heaven was engaged against him, making use of the ministration of the angels of heaven. Some way or other the heavenly bodies, not arrested, as when the sun stood still at Joshua's word, but going on in their courses, fought against Sisera. Those whom God is an enemy to, the whole creation is at war with. Perhaps the flashes of lightning by which the stars fought was that which frightened the horses, so as that they pranced till their very hoofs were broken, *ver. 22.* and probably overturned the chariots of iron which they drew, or turned them back upon their owners.

6. The river of Kishon fought against them. It swept them away, and abundance of them that hoped to make their escape through it, *ver. 21.* Ordinarily it was but a shallow river, and being in their own country, we may suppose they well knew its fords, and safest passages, and yet now probably by the great rain that fell it was so swelled, and the stream so deep and strong, that those that attempted to pass it were drowned, being feeble and fainty, and unable to make their way through it. And then were the horse hoofs broken by means of the plungings. So it is in the margin, *ver. 22.* The river of Kishon is called that ancient river, because described or celebrated by ancient historians or poets, or rather because it was designed of old in the council of God, to serve his purposes against Sisera at this time, and did so as if it had been made on purpose; thus the water of the old pool God is said to have fashioned long ago, for that use to which it was put, *Jsa. xxii. 11.*

7. Deborah's own soul fought against them; she speaks of it with a holy exultation, *ver. 21.* *O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength*. She did it by exciting others to do it, and assisting them, which she did with all her heart; also by her prayers; as Moses conquered Amalek by lifting up his hand, so Deborah vanquished Sisera by lifting up her heart. And when the soul is employed in holy exercises, and heart-work is made of them, through the grace of God, the strength of our spiritual enemies will be trodden down, and will fall before us.

3. In this great engagement she observes who stood neuter, and did not side with Israel as might have been expected. It is strange to find how many, even of those that were called Israelites, basely deserted this glorious cause, and declined to appear. No mention is made of Judah or Simeon among the tribes concerned, because they lying so very remote from the scene of action, had not an opportunity to appear, and therefore it was not expected from them, but for those that lay near, and yet would not venture, indelible marks of disgrace are here put upon them, and they deserved it.

1. Reuben basely declined the service, *ver. 15, 16.* Justly had he long ago been deprived of the privileges of the birth-right; and still doth his dying father's doom stick by him, *unstable as water he shall not excel*. Two things hindered them from engaging. (1.) Their divisions. This jarring string, the twice strikes

strikes upon to their shame. For the divisions of Reuben (or, in these divisions) there were great thoughts, impressions, and searchings of heart. Not only for their division from Canaan by the river Jordan, that needed not to have hindered them, had they been hearty in the cause, for Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and yet from Machir of Gilead came down governors, but it means either that they were divided among themselves, could not agree who should go, or who should lead, each striving to gain the posts of honour, and shun those of danger, some unhappy contests in their tribe kept them from uniting together, and with their brethren, for the common good. Or, that they were divided in their opinion of this war, from the rest of the tribes, thought the attempt either not justifiable, or not practicable, and therefore blamed those that engaged in it, and did themselves decline it; this occasioned great searchings of heart among the rest; especially when they had reason to suspect that whatever Reuben pretended, his fitting still now proceeded from a cooling of his affections to his brethren, and an alienation of mind from them, which occasioned them many sad thoughts. It grieves us to see our mothers children angry with us for doing our duty; and look strange upon us when we most need their friendship and assistance. (2.) Their business in the world. *Reuben abode among the sheepfolds*, a warmer safer place than the camp, pretending they could not conveniently leave the sheep they tended, he loved to *hear the bleatings of the flocks*, or, as some read it, the whistlings of the flocks, the musick which the shepherds made with their oaten reeds, or pipes, and the pastorals they sung, these Reuben preferred before the martial drum and trumpet. Thus many are kept from doing their duty by the fear of trouble, the love of ease, and an inordinate affection to their worldly business and advantage. Narrow selfish spirits care not what comes of the interests of God's church, so they can but get, keep, and save money, *All seek their own*, Phil. ii. 21.

2. Dan and Asher did the same, *ver. 17*. These two lay on the sea-coast, and (1.) Dan pretended he could not leave his ships, but they would be exposed, and therefore *I pray thee have me excused*. Those of that tribe perhaps pleaded that their sea-trade dismitted them for land-service, and diverted them from it; but Zebulun also was a haven of ships, a sea-faring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition. There is no excuse we make to shift off duty, but what some or other have broken through, and set aside, whose courage and resolution will rise up against us, and shame us. (2.) Asher pretended he must stay at home to repair the breaches, which the sea had in some places made upon his land, and to fortify his works against the encroachments of it, or, he abode in his creeks, or small havens, where his trading vessels lay to attend them. A little thing will serve those for a pretence to stay at home, that have no mind to engage in the most necessary services, because there is difficulty and danger in them.

3. But above all Meroz is condemned, and a curse pronounced upon the inhabitants of it, *Because they came not to the help of the Lord*, *ver. 23*. Probably, this was some city that lay near the scene of action, and therefore had a fair opportunity of shewing their obedience to God, their concern for Israel, and of doing good service to the common cause, but they basely declined it, for fear of Jabin's iron chariots, being willing to sleep in a whole skin. The Lord needed their help, he made it to appear he could do his work without them; but that was no thanks to them; for ought they knew the attempt might have miscarried for want of their hand; and therefore they are cursed for *not coming to the help of the Lord*, when it was in effect proclaimed, *who is on the Lord's side*. The cause between God and the mighty, the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness will not admit of a neutrality, God looks upon those as against him, that *are not with him*. This curse is pronounced by the *angel of the Lord*, our Lord Jesus, the captain of the Lord's host, and *those whom he curseth are cursed indeed*, and further than we have warrant and authority from him we may not curse. He that will richly reward all his good soldiers, will certainly and severely punish cowards and deserters. This city of Meroz seems to have been at this time a considerable place, since something great was expected from it, but probably after the angel of the Lord had pronounced this curse upon it, it dwindled, and, like the fig-tree which Christ cursed, withered away, so that we never read of it after this in scripture.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. 25. He asked water, and she gave him milk, she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. 26. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmans hammer: and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. 27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead. 28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattices, Why is his chariot so long in coming?

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why tarry the wheels of his chariots? 29. Her wife ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to her self, 30. Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, *meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?* 31. So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

Deborah here concludes this triumphant song,

1. With the praises of Jael, her sister hero, whose valiant act had compleated and crowned the victory. She had mentioned her before, *ver. 6*. as one that would have served her country if it had been in her power, now she applauds her as one that did serve it admirably well, when it was in her power. Her poetry is finest, and most florid here in the latter end of the song. How honourably doth she speak of Jael (*ver. 24*.) who preferred her peace with the God of Israel before her peace with the king of Canaan, and tho' not a native Israel (for ought appears) yet heartily espoused the cause of Israel in this critical conjuncture, jeopardied her life as truly as if she had been in the high places of the field, and bravely fought for those whom she saw God fought for; *Blessed shall she be above women in the tent*. Note, Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a very low and narrow sphere of activity, if they serve God in that, according to their capacity, shall in no wise lose their reward. Jael in the tent wins as rich a blessing as Barak in the field.

Nothing is more confounding, grievous, and shameful, than disappointment, and Deborah here doth most elegantly describe two great disappointments, the shame of which was typical of sinners everlasting shame.

1. Sisera found a fatal enemy where he expected a fast and faithful friend. (1.) Jael shewed him the kindness of a friend, and perhaps at that time intended him no other than kindness, until God by an immediate impulse upon her mind (which impulses then were to be regarded, and carried so much of their own evidence with them that they might have been relied upon, but cannot now be pretended to) directed her to do otherwise, *ver. 25*. He asked only for fair water to quench his thirst, but she not only to shew her housewifery, and good house-keeping, but to express her respect to him, *gave him milk and brought forth butter*, that is, (say some interpreters) milk which had the butter taken from it (we call it butter-milk). No, (say others) it was milk that had the butter still yet in it, we call it cream; which soever it was, it is like, it was the best her house afforded; and to set it off, she brought it in a *lordly dish*, such as she called so, the finest she had, and better than she ordinarily used at her own table. This confirmed Sisera's opinion of her friendship, and made him sleep the faster, and the more secure. But (2.) She proved his mortal enemy, gave him his death's stroke, it is curiously described, *ver. 26, 27*. (1.) How great doth Jael look hammering Sisera, as it is in the margin, mauling that proud man, that had been so long the terror of the mighty, and sending him down slain to the pit, with *his iniquities upon his bones*, Ezek. xxxii. 27. She seems to have gone about it with no more terror or concern, than if she had been going to nail one of the boards, or bars, of her tent, so confident was she of divine aid and protection. We read it, *she smote off his head*, probably with his own sword, which, now his head was nailed through, she durst take from his side, but not before, for fear of waking him. But because there was no occasion for cutting off his head, nor was it mentioned in the history, many think it should be read, *she struck through his head*. That head which had been proudly lifted up against God and Israel, and in which had been forged bloody designs for the destruction of God's people, Jael finds a soft place in, and into that with a good will strikes her nail. (2.) How mean doth Sisera look, fallen at Jael's feet, *ver. 27*. At the feet of this female executioner he bowed, he fell, all his struggles for life availed not, she followed her blow, until he fell down dead. There lies extended the deserted carcase of that proud man, not in the bed of honour, not in the high places of the field, nor having any glorious wound to shew from a glittering sword, or a bow of steel, but in the corner of a tent, at the feet of a woman, with a disgraceful wound by a sorry nail stuck through his head. Thus is shame the fate of proud men. And it is a very lively representation of the ruin of those sinners whose prosperity flays them, it flatters and caresses them with milk and butter in a *lordly dish*, as if it would make them easy and happy, but it nails their heads and hearts too to the ground in earthly mindedness, pierceth them through with many sorrows, its flatteries are fatal, and sink them at last into destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

2. Sisera's mother had the tidings brought her of her son's fall and ruin, then when she was big with expectation of his glorious and triumphant return, *ver. 28, 29, 30*. where we have (1.) Her fond desire to see her son come back in triumph. *Why is his chariot so long in coming?* She speaks this not so much out of a concern for his safety, or any jealousy of his having miscarried,

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she had no fear of that, so confident was she of his success; but out of a longing for his glory, which with a feminine weakness she was passionately impatient to see, chides the lingring chariot, and expostulates concerning the delays of it, little thinking that her unhappy son had been before this forced to quit that chariot which they were so proud of, and which she thought came so slowly. *The chariots of his glory were now become the shame of his house,* Isa. xxii. 18. Let us take heed of indulging such desires as these towards any temporal good thing, particularly towards vain-glory, for that was it she here doted on. Eagerness and impatience in our desires do us a great deal of prejudice, and make it intolerable to us to be crossed: But towards the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the glories of that day, we should thus stand affected, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,* for here we cannot be disappointed. (2.) Her foolish hope and confidence that he would come at last in so much the greater pomp. Her wise ladies, answered her, and thought they gave a very good account of the delay; yea, she (in her wisdom, saith the Chaldee tauntingly) made answer to herself, *Have they not sped,* no doubt they have, and that which delays them is, that they are *dividing the prey*; which is so much, that it is a work of time to make a distribution of it. In the spoil they please themselves with the thought of, observe (1.) How impudently, and to the reproach and scandal of their sex, these ladies boast of the multitude of damsels, which the soldiers would have the abusing of. (2.) How childishly they please themselves with the hope of seeing Sisera himself in a gaudy mantle, of *divers colours*, how charmingly would it look, *of divers colours of needle-work*, plundered out of the wardrobe of some Israelitish lady; it is repeated again, as that which pleased their fancy above any thing, *of divers colours of needle-work on both sides*, and therefore very rich, such pieces of embroidery they hoped Sisera would have to present his mother and the ladies with. Thus apt are we to deceive our selves with great expectations, and confident hopes of honour and pleasure, and wealth in this world, by which we prepare for our selves the shame and grief of a disappointment. And thus doth God often bring ruin on his enemies, when they are most elevated.

2. She concludes all with a prayer to God; 1. For the destruction of all his foes: So, so shamefully, so miserably *let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, let all that hope to triumph in Israel's ruin be thus disappointed, and triumphed over, *Do to them all as unto Sisera*, Psal. lxxxiii. 9. Tho' our enemies are to be prayed for, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed against; and when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest. Deborah was a prophetess, and this prayer was a prediction, that in due time all God's enemies shall perish, Psal. xcii. 9. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. 2. For the exaltation and comfort of all his friends. But let them that love him, and heartily wish well to his kingdom among men, be *as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength*; let them shine so bright, appear so glorious in the eye of the world, cast such benign influences, be as much out of the reach of their enemies, who curse the rising sun, because it scorseth them; let them *rejoice as a strong man to run a race*, Psal. xix. 5. Let them, as burning and shining lights in their places, dispel the mists of darkness, and shine with more and more lustre and power *unto the perfect day*, Prov. iv. 18. Such shall be the honour, and such the joy of all that love God in sincerity, and for ever they shall *shine as the sun in the firmament of our Father*.

The victory here celebrated with this song, was of such happy consequence to Israel, that for the best part of one age they enjoyed the peace which it opened the way to; *The land had rest forty years*, i. e. so long it was from this victory to the raising up of Gideon. And well it had been, if when the churches, the tribes had rest, they had been edified, and had *walked in the fear of the Lord*.

C H A P. VI.

Nothing that occurred in the quiet and peaceable times of Israel is recorded, the forty years rest after the conquests of Jabin is passed over in silence; and here begins the story of another distress, and another deliverance by Gideon, the fourth of the Judges. Here is, (1.) The calamitous condition of Israel, by the inroads of the Midianites, ver. 1—6. (2.) The message God sent them by a prophet, by convincing them of sin, to prepare them for deliverance, ver. 7—10. (3.) The raising up of Gideon to be their deliverer. 1. A commission which God sent him by the hand of an angel, and confirmed by a sign, ver. 11—24. 2. The first-fruits of his government in the reforming of his father's house, ver. 25—32. 3. The preparations he made for a war with the Midianites, and the encouragement given him by a sign, ver. 33—40.

1. **A**ND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

2. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. 3. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them: 4. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5. For they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. 6. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

Here is, (1.) Israel's sin renewed. They *did evil in the sight of the Lord*, ver. 1. The burnt child dreads the fire; yet this perverse unthinking people, that had so often smarted sorely for their idolatry, upon a little respite of God's judgments return to it again. *This people hath a revolting, rebellious heart*, not kept in awe by the terror of God's judgments, nor engaged in honour and gratitude by the great things he had done for them, to keep themselves in his love. The providence of God will not change the hearts and lives of finners.

2. Israel's troubles repeated. This would follow of course; let all that sin expect to suffer, let all that return to folly expect to return to misery, *with the froward God will shew himself froward*, Psal. xviii. 26. and will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 21, 24. Now as to this trouble, (1.) It arose from a very despicable enemy. God delivered them into the hand of Midian, ver. 1. not Midian in the south where Jethro lived, but Midian in the east that joined to Moab, Numb. xxii. 4. A people that all men despised as uncultivated, and unheaded, hence we read not here of any king, lord, or general, that they had, but the force with which they destroyed Israel was an undisciplined mob; but, which made it the more grievous, they were a people that Israel had formerly subdued, and in a manner destroyed, see Numb. xxxi. 7. and yet by this time, near two hundred years after, the poor remains of them were so multiplied, and so magnified, that they were capable of being made a very severe scourge to Israel. Thus *God moved them to jealousy with those which were not a people*, even a foolish nation, Deut. xxxii. 21. The meanest creature will serve to chastise those that have made the great Creator their enemy. And when those we are authorized to rule prove rebellious, and disobedient to us, it concerns us to enquire whether we have not been so to our sovereign ruler. (2.) It arose to a very formidable height, ver. 2. *the hand of Midian prevailed*, purely by their multitude. God had promised to increase Israel as the sand on the sea, but their sin stopped their growth and diminished them, and then their enemies, tho' otherwise every way inferior to them, overpowered them with numbers. They came upon them as *grasshoppers for multitude*, ver. 5. not in a regular army to engage them in the field, but in a confused swarm to plunder the country, quarter themselves upon it, and enrich themselves with its spoils. Bands of robbers, and no better. And sinful Israel being separated by sin from God, had not spirit to make head against them. Observe the wretched havock that these Midianites made with their rapparees in Israel. Here is, 1. The Israelites imprisoned, or rather imprisoning themselves in dens and caves, ver. 2. This was owing purely to their own timorousness and faint-heartedness, that they would rather fly than fight; it was the effect of a guilty conscience, which made them tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and the just punishment of their apostasy from God, who thus fought against them with those very terrors with which he would otherwise have fought for them; had it not been for this, we cannot but think Israel a match for the Midianites, and able enough to make head against them: but the heart that departeth from God is lost, not only to that which is good, but to that which is great. Sin dispirits men, and makes them sneak into dens and caves. The day will come when chief captains and mighty men will call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. 2. The Israelites impoverished, greatly impoverished, ver. 6. The Midianites, and other the children of the east, that joined with them to live by spoil and rapine, as long before the Sabeans and Chaldeans did that plundered Job, free-booters, these made frequent incursions into the land of Canaan; that fruitful land was a great temptation to them; and that sloth and luxury into which the Israelites were sunk by forty years rest, made them and their substance an easy prey to them. They came up against them, ver. 3. pitched their camps among them, ver. 4. and brought their cattle with them, particularly camels innumerable, ver. 5. not a flying party to make a sally upon them, and be gone presently, but they resolved to force their stay, penetrated through the heart of the country as far as Gaza, on the western side, ver. 4. they let the Israelites alone to sow their ground, but towards harvest they came and seized all, and eat it up, and destroyed it, both grass and corn, and when they went away

away took with them the sheep and oxen, so that in short they left no sustenance for Israel, except what was privately stolen by the rightful owners into the dens and caves. Now here we may see,

1. The justice of God in the punishment of their sin. They had neglected to honour God with their substance in tithes and offerings, and had prepared that for Baal, with which God should have been served, and now God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof, *Hos. ii. 8, 9.* 2. The consequent of God's departure from a people; when he goes, all good goes and all mischiefs break in. When Israel kept in with God, they reaped what others sowed, *Josh. xxiv. 13. Psal. cv. 44.* but now God had forsaken them, others reaped what they sowed. Let us take occasion from this to bless God for our national peace and tranquillity, that we *eat the labour of our hands.*

3. Israel's sense of God's hand revived at last. Seven years, year after year, did the Midianites make these inroads upon them, each we may suppose worse than other, *ver. 1.* until at last, all other succours failing, *Israel cried unto the Lord, ver. 6.* for crying to Baal ruined them, and would not help them. When God judgeth he will overcome; and sinners shall be made either to bend or break before him.

7. ¶ And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, because of the Midianites; 8. That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, 9. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; 10. And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God, fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

Observe here, 1. The cognizance God took of the cries of Israel, when at length they were directed towards him. Tho' in their prosperity they had neglected him, and made court to his rivals, and tho' they never looked towards him till they were driven to it by extremity, yet upon their complaint and prayer he intended relief for them. Thus would he shew how ready he is to forgive, how swift he is to shew mercy, and how inclinable to hear prayer, that sinners may be encouraged to return and repent, *Psal. cxxx. 4.*

2. The method God took of working deliverance for them. Before he sent an angel to raise them up a saviour, he sent a prophet, to reprove them for sin, and to bring them to repentance, *ver. 8.* This prophet is not named, but he was a man, a prophet, not an angel, as *chap. ii. 1.* Whether this prophet took an opportunity of delivering this message to the children of Israel, when they were met together in a general assembly, or some solemn feast, or other great occasion, or whether he went from city to city, and from tribe to tribe, preaching to this purpose, is not certain, but his errand was to convince them of sin, that in their crying to the Lord, they might confess that with sorrow and shame, and not spend their breath only in complaining of their trouble. They cried to God for a deliverer, and God sent them a prophet to instruct them, and to make them ready for deliverance. Note, (1.) We have reason to hope God is designing mercy for us, if we find he is by his grace preparing us for it. If to those that are sick he sends a messenger, an interpreter, by whom he shews unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious, and grants a recovery, *Job xxxiii. 23, 24.* (2.) The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing of a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them. He thus turns us to him, and then causeth his face to shine, *Psal. lxxx. 19.*

We have here the heads of the message which this prophet delivered in to Israel, in the name of the Lord.

1. He sets before them the great things God had done for them, *ver. 8, 9.* Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; they had worshipped the gods of the nations, as if they had had no God of their own to worship, and therefore might choose whom they pleased, but they are here minded of one whom they had forgotten, who was known by the title of the God of Israel, and to him they must return. They had turned to other gods, as if their own had been either incapable or unwilling to protect them; and therefore they are told what he did for their fathers, in whose loins they were, the benefit of which descended, and still remained to this their ungrateful seed. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, where otherwise they had continued in perpetual poverty and slavery. (2.) He delivered them out of the hands of all that oppressed them; this is mentioned to intimate that the reason why they were not now delivered out of the hands of the oppressing Midianites, was not for want of any power or good will in God, but because by their iniquity they had sold themselves, and God would not redeem them until they by repentance revoked the bargain. (3.) He put them in quiet possession of this good land, this not only aggravated their sin, and affixed the brand of base ingratitude to it, but it justified God, and cleared him from blame upon the account of the trouble

they were now in, they could not say he was unkind, for he had given all possible proofs of his designing well for them, if ill befel them notwithstanding, they must thank themselves.

2. He shews the easiness and equity of God's demands and expectations from them, *ver. 10.* I am the Lord your God, to whom you lie under the highest obligations, fear not the gods of the Amorites, i. e. do not worship them, nor shew any respect to them; do not worship them for fear of their doing you any hurt, for what hurt can they do you while I am your God? Fear God, and you need not fear them.

3. He charges them with rebellion against God, who had laid this injunction upon them, *but ye have not obeyed my voice.* The charge is short, but very comprehensive; this was the malignity of all their sin, it was disobedience to God; and therefore it was it that brought these calamities upon them, under which they were now groaning, pursuant to the threatnings annexed to those commands. He intends hereby to bring them to repentance, and our repentance is then right and genuine, when the sinfulness of sin, as disobedience to God, is that in it which we chiefly lament.

11. ¶ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. 13. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15. And he said unto him, Oh my lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my fathers house. 16. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. 17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. 18. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. 19. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. 21. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh, and the unleavened cakes: and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes: then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. 22. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God: for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. 23. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die. 24. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

It is not said what effect the prophet's sermon had upon the people, but we hope it had a good effect, and that some of them at least repented and reformed upon it, for here immediately after, we have the dawning of the day of their deliverance, by the effectual calling of Gideon to take upon him the command of their forces against the Midianites.

1. The person to be commissioned for this service was Gideon, the son of Joash, *ver. 11.* The father was now living, but he was passed by, and this honour put upon the son, for the father kept up in his own family the worship of Baal, *ver. 25.* which we may suppose this son, as far as was in his power, witnessed against. He was of the half-tribe of Manasseh that lay in Canaan, of the family of Abiezzer, the eldest house of that tribe, *Josh. xvii. 2.* Hitherto the Judges were raised up out of that tribe which suffered most by the oppression, and probably it was so here.

2. The person that gave him the commission, was an angel of the Lord; it should seem not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the Eternal Word, the Lord of the angels, who then appeared

appeared upon some great occasions in human shape, as a prelude (saith the learned bishop Patrick) to what he intended in the fullness of time, when he would take our nature upon him, as we say, for good and all. This angel is here called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, *ver. 14, 16.* and he saith, *I will be with thee.* This divine person appeared here to Gideon, and it is observable how he found him, (1.) Retired; all alone; God often manifests him to his people, when they are out of the noise and hurry of this world. Silence and solitude befriend our communion with God. (2.) Employed in threshing wheat, with a staff or rod, (so the word signifies) such as they used in beating out, fitches and cummin, *Iſa. xxviii. 17.* but now used for wheat, probably, because he had but a little to thresh, he needed not the oxen to tread it out. It was not then looked upon as any diminution to him, tho' he was a person of some account, and a *mighty man of valour*, to lay his hand to the business of the husbandman. He had many servants, *ver. 27.* and yet would not himself live in idleness. We put ourselves in the way of divine visits, when we employ ourselves in honest business. Tidings of Christ's birth were brought to the shepherds, when they were keeping their flocks. The work he was about, was an emblem of that greater work to which he was now to be called, as the disciples fishing was. From threshing corn he is fetched to thresh the Midianites, *Iſa. xli. 15.* (3.) Distressed; he was threshing his wheat, not in the threshing-floor, the proper place, but by the wine-press, in some private unsuspected corner, for fear of the Midianites. He himself shared in the common calamity, and now the angel came to animate him against Midian, when he himself could speak so feelingly of the heaviness of their yoke. The day of the greatest distress is God's time to appear for his peoples relief.

Let us now see what passed between the angel and Gideon, who knew not for certain, till after he was gone, that he was an angel, but supposed he was a prophet.

1. The angel accosted him with respect, and assured him of the presence of God with him, *ver. 12.* He calls him a *mighty man of valour*, perhaps because he observed how he threshed his corn with all his might, and seest thou a man diligent in his business, whatever his business is, he shall *stand before kings.* He that is faithful in a *few things*, shall be *ruler over many.* Gideon was a man of a brave active spirit, and yet buried alive in obscurity, through the iniquity of the times: but is here animated to undertake something great, like himself, with that word, *the Lord is with thee*, or as the Chaldee reads it, *the Word of the Lord is thy help.* It was very sure the Lord was with him when this angel was with him. By this word, (1.) He gives him his commission. If we have God's presence with us, that will justify us, and bear us out in our undertakings. (2.) He inspires him with all necessary qualifications for the execution of his commission. The Lord is with thee to guide and strengthen thee, to animate and support thee. (3.) He assures him of success; for *if God be for us, who can prevail against us?* If he be with us, nothing can be wanting to us? The presence of God with us is all in all to our prosperity, whatever we do. Gideon was a *mighty man of valour*, and yet he could bring nothing to pass without the presence of God, and that presence is enough to make any man mighty in valour, and to give a man courage at any time.

2. Gideon gave a very melancholy answer to this joyful salutation, *ver. 13.* *O my Lord, if the Lord be with us* (which the Chaldee reads, *Is the Shechinah of the Lord our help?* making that the same with *the Word of the Lord*) *why then is all this befallen us?* All this trouble and distress from the Midianites incursions, which forces me to thresh wheat here by the wine-press; all this loss, and grief, and fright? and *where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of?* Observe, in this reply he regards not the praise of his own valour, nor doth that in the least elevate him, or give him any encouragement; tho' it is probable the angel adapted what he said to that which Gideon was at the same time thinking of; while his laborious hands were employed about his wheat, his working head and daring heart were meditating Israel's rescue, and Midian's ruin, with which thought, he that knows the heart seasonably sets in, calls him a man of valour for his brave projects, and opens him a way to put them in execution; yet Gideon, as if not conscious to himself of any thing great or encouraging in his own spirit, fastens only on the assurance the angel had given him of God's presence, as that by which they held all their comfort. Observe, the angel spake in particular to him, *the Lord is with thee*, but he expostulates for all, *if the Lord be with us*, herding himself with the thousands of Israel, and admits no comfort but what they might be sharers in, so far is he from the thoughts of monopolizing it, tho' he had so fair an occasion given him. Note, Publick spirits reckon that only an honour and joy to themselves, which puts them in a capacity of serving the common interests of God's church.

Gideon was a mighty man of valour, but as yet weak in faith, which makes it hard to him to reconcile to the assurances now given him of the presence of God, (1.) The distress to which Israel was reduced. Why is *all this* (and *all this* was no little) *befallen us?* Note, It is sometimes hard, but never impossible to reconcile cross providences with the presence of God and his favour. (2.) The delay of their deliverance, *where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of?* Why doth not the same power which delivered

our fathers from under the yoke of the Egyptians, deliver us out of the hands of the Midianites: as if because God did not presently work miracles for their deliverance; tho' they had by their sins forfeited his favour and help, it must be questioned, whether ever he had wrought the miracles which their fathers told them of, or if he had, whether he had now the same wisdom and power, and good-will to his people that he had had formerly. This was his weakness. We must not expect that the miracles which were wrought when a church was in the forming, and some great truth in the settling, should be continued and repeated when the formation and settlement are compleated. No, nor that the mercies God shewed to our fathers that served him, and kept close to him, should be renewed to us, if we degenerate and revolt from him. Gideon ought not to have said, either, (1.) That *God had delivered them into the hands of the Midianites*, for by their iniquities they had sold themselves. Or, (2.) That now they were in their hands, he had forsaken them, for he had lately sent them a prophet, *ver. 8.* which was a certain indication that he had not forsaken them.

3. The angel gave him a very effectual answer to his objections, by giving him a commission to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Midianites, and assuring him of success therein, *ver. 14.* Now the angel is called Jehovah, for he speaks as one having authority, and not as a messenger. (1.) There was something extraordinary in the look he now gave to Gideon; it was a gracious favourable look, which revived his spirits that drooped, and silenced his fears, such a look as that, with which God's *countenance beholds the upright*, *Psal. xi. 7.* He looked upon him, and smiled at the objections he made, which he gave him no direct answer to, but girt and clothed him with such power as would shortly enable him to answer them himself, and make him ashamed that ever he had made them. It was a speaking look, like Christ's upon Peter, *Luke xxii. 61.* a powerful look, a look that strangely darted new light and life into Gideon's breast, and inspired him with a generous heat, far above what before he felt. (2.) But much more was there in what he said to him. 1. He commissioned him to appear and act as Israel's deliverer. Such a one the few thinking people in the nation, and Gideon among the rest, were now expecting to be raised up, according to God's former method in answer to the cries of oppressed Israel, and now Gideon is told thou art the man: *Go in this thy might*; this might, wherewith thou art now threshing wheat, go and employ it to a nobler purpose, *I will make thee a thresher of men.* Or rather, this might wherewith thou art now endued by this look. God gave him his commission, by giving him all the qualifications that were necessary for the execution of it, which is more than the mightiest prince and potentate on earth can do for those to whom he gives commissions. God's fitting men for work, is a sure and constant evidence of his calling them to it. Go, not in thy might, that which is natural, and of thy self, depend not on thine own valour, but go in this thy might, this which thou hast now received, *go in the strength of the Lord God*; that is the strength with which thou must strengthen thy self. 2. He assured him of success, this was enough to put courage into him, he might be confident he should not miscarry in the attempt; it should not turn either to his own disgrace, or the damage of his people, as baffled enterprizes do, but to his honour and their happiness, *thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites*, and so shalt not only be an eye-witness, but a glorious instrument of such wonders as thy fathers told thee of. Gideon, we may suppose looked as one astonished at this strange and surprizing power conferred upon him, and questions whether he may depend upon what he hears, the angel ratifies his commission with a *Teste meipso*; there needed no more. *Have not I commanded thee?* I that have all power in heaven and earth, and particular authority here as Israel's king, giving commissions immediately. *I who am that I am*, the same that sent Moses, *Exod. iii. 14.*

4. Gideon made a very modest objection against this commission, *ver. 15.* *O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?* This question speaks him either, 1. Distrustful of God and his power. As if tho' God should be with him, yet it were impossible for him to save Israel. True faith is often weak, yet it shall not be rejected, but encouraged and strengthened. 2. Inquisitive concerning the methods he must take; Lord I labour under all imaginable disadvantages for it, if I must do it, thou must put me in the way. Note, Those who receive commissions from God, must expect, and seek for instructions from him. Or rather, 3. Humble, self-diffident, and self-denying. The angel had honoured him, but see how meanly he speaks of himself, my family is comparatively poor in Manasseh, impoverished, it may be, more than other families by the Midianites, and am the least, that have the least honour and interest in my father's house, what can I pretend to do, I am utterly unfit for the service, and unworthy of the honour. Note, God often chuseth to do great things by those that are little, especially that are so in their own eyes. God delights to advance the humble.

5. This objection was soon answered by a repetition of the promise, that God would be with him, *ver. 16.* Object not thy poverty and meanness, that hath indeed often balked men in great enterprizes, but what is that to a man that has the presence of God with him, which will make up all the deficiencies of honour

honour and estate. *Surely I will be with thee*, to direct and strengthen thee, and put such a reputation upon thee, that how weak soever thy personal interest is, thou shalt have soldiers enough to follow thee, and be assured *thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man*, as easily as if they were but one man, and as effectually. All the thousands of Midian shall be as if they had but one neck, and thou shalt have the cutting of it off.

6. Gideon desires to have his faith confirmed, touching this commission; for he would not be over credulous of that which tended so much to his own praise, would not venture upon an undertaking so far above him, and in which we must engage many more, but he would be well satisfied himself of his authority, and would be able to give satisfaction to others who gave him that authority. He therefore humbly begs of this divine person, whoever he was,

1. That he would *give him a sign*, ver. 17. And the commission being given him out of the common road of providence, he might reasonably expect it should be confirmed by some act of God out of the common course of nature. Shew me a sign to assure me of the truth of this, concerning which thou talkest with me, that it is something more than talk, and that thou art in earnest. Now under the dispensation of the Spirit, we are not to expect signs before our eyes, such as Gideon here desired, but must earnestly pray to God, that if *we have found grace in his sight*, he would shew us a sign in our heart, by the powerful operations of his Spirit there, *fulfilling the work of faith*, and perfecting what is lacking in it.

2. In order hereunto that he would accept of a treat, and so give him a further and longer opportunity of conversation with him, ver. 18. Those who know what it is to have communion with God desire the continuance of it, and are loth to part, praying with Gideon, *depart not hence, I pray thee*. That which Gideon designs in courting his stay, was, that he might bring out some provision of meat for this stranger; he did not take him into the house to entertain him there, either because his father's house were not well affected to him and his friends, or because he desired still to be in private with this stranger, and to converse with him alone, therefore calls not for a servant to bring the provision, but fetcheth it himself; or because thus his father Abraham entertained angels unawares, not in his tent, but under a tree, Gen. xviii. 8. Upon the angel's promise to stay dinner with him, he hastened to bring out a kid, which, it is likely, was ready boiled for his own dinner, so that in making it ready, he had nothing to do but to put it in the basket (for here was no sauce to serve it up in, nor the dish garnished) and the broth in a vessel, and so he presented it, ver. 19. Hereby he intended, (1.) To testify his grateful and generous respects to this stranger, and in him to God who sent him, as one that studied what he should render. He had pleaded the poverty of his family, ver. 15. to excuse himself from being a general, but not here to excuse himself from being hospitable. Out of the little which the Midianites had left him, he would gladly spare enough to entertain a friend, especially a messenger from heaven, (2.) To try who, and what this extraordinary person was. What he brought out is called his present, ver. 18. It is the same word that is used for a meat-offering, and perhaps that word is used, which signifies both, because Gideon intended to leave it to this divine person to determine which it should be, when he had it before him, whether a feast, or a meat-offering, and accordingly he would be able to judge concerning him; if he eat of it as common meat, he would suppose him to be a man, a prophet; if otherwise, as it proved, he should know him to be an angel.

7. The angel gives him a sign, in and by that which he had kindly prepared for his entertainment. For what we offer to God for his glory, and in token of our gratitude to him, will be made by the grace of God to turn to our own comfort and satisfaction. The angel ordered him to take the flesh and bread out of the basket, and lay it upon a hard and cold rock, and to pour out the broth upon it, which, if he brought it hot, would soon be cold there; and *Gideon did so*, ver. 20. believing that the angel appointed it, not in contempt of his courtesy, but with an intention to give him a sign, which he did abundantly to his satisfaction. For, 1. He turned the *meat into an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour* unto himself; shewing hereby that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God who was to be served and honoured by sacrifice, and who in the fulness of time was to make himself a sacrifice. 2. He brought fire *out of the rock* to consume this sacrifice, summoning it, not by striking the rock, as we strike fire out of a flint, but a gentle touch given to the offering with the end of his staff, ver. 21. Hereby he gave him a sign, that he had *found grace in his sight*, for God testified his acceptance of sacrifices by kindling them, if publick, with fire from heaven, as those of Moses and Elias; if private, as this, with fire out of the earth, which was equivalent, both were the products of divine power; and this acceptance of his sacrifice evidenced the acceptance of his person, confirmed his commission, and perhaps was intended to signify his success in the execution of it, that he and his army should be a surprizing terror and consumption to the Midianites, like this fire out of the rock. 3. He *departed out of his sight* immediately; did not walk off as a man, but vanished and disappeared as a spirit. Here was as much of a sign as he could wish.

No. XVIII.

8. Gideon, tho' no doubt he was confirmed in his faith, by the indications given of the divinity of the person who had spoken to him, yer for the present was put into a great fright by it, till God graciously pacified him, and removed his fears. (1.) Gideon speaks peril to himself, ver. 22. *When he perceived that he was an angel*, which was not till he was departed, as the two disciples knew not it was Jesus they had been talking with, till he was going, Luke xxiv. 31. Then he cried out, *Alas! O Lord God*, God be merciful to me, I am undone, for *I have seen an angel*, as Jacob, who admired that his life was preserved when he had seen God, Gen. xxxii. 30. Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God's wrath and curse, an express from heaven has been a terror to him, knowing he can expect no good tidings thence, at least in this world of sense, it is a very awful thing to have any sensible conversation with that world of spirits to which we are so much strangers. Gideon's courage failed him now. (2.) God speaks peace to him, ver. 23. It might have been fatal to him, but he assures him it should not. The Lord was *departed out of his sight*, ver. 21. But tho' he must no longer walk by sight, he might still live by faith, that faith which comes by hearing, for the Lord saith to him, with an audible voice, as bishop Patrick thinks, these encouraging words, *peace be unto thee*, all is well, and be thou satisfied that it is so, fear not, he that came to employ thee, did not intend to slay thee, *thou shalt not die*. See how ready God is to revive the hearts of those that tremble at his word and presence, and to give them assurances of his mercy that stand in awe of his majesty.

Lastly, The memorial of this vision which Gideon set up, was a monument in form of an altar, the rather, because it was by a kind of sacrifice upon a rock, without the solemnity of an altar, that the angel manifested his acceptance of him; then it needed not, the angel's staff was sufficient to sanctify the gift without an altar. But now it was of use to preserve the remembrance of it, which was done by the name he gave to it, *Jehovah-shalom*, ver. 24. *The Lord peace*. This is, (1.) The title of the Lord that spake to him, compare Gen. xvi. 13. The same that is the *Lord our righteousness, is our peace*, Eph. ii. 14. Our reconciler, and so our Saviour. Or, (2.) The substance of what he said to him, *the Lord spake peace*, and created that fruit of the lips, bid me be easy when I was in that mighty toils. Or, (3.) A prayer grounded upon what he had said, so the margin understands it, *the Lord sent peace*, i. e. rest from the present trouble, for still the publick welfare lay nearest his heart.

25. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy fathers young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: 26. And build an altar unto the LORD thy God, upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove, which thou shalt cut down. 27. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: And so it was because he feared his fathers household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. 28. ¶ And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. 29. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. 30. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. 31. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. 32. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

Here, 1. Orders are given to Gideon to begin his government with the reformation of his father's house, ver. 25, 26. A correspondence being settled between God and Gideon, by the appearance of the angel to him, it was kept up in another way, the same night after he had seen God, when he was full of thoughts concerning what had passed, which probably he had not yet communicated to any, *the Lord said unto him* in a dream, *do so and so*. Note, God's visits, if gratefully received, shall be graciously repeated. Bid God welcome, and he will come again. Gideon is appointed, (1.) To throw down Baal's altar, which it seems his father had, either for his own house, or perhaps for the whole town. See the power of God's grace that he could raise up a reformer,

reformer, and the condescensions of his grace, that he would raise up a deliverer out of the family of one that was a ring-leader in idolatry. But Gideon must now not think it enough, not to worship at that altar, which we charitably hope he had not done, but he must throw it down; not consecrate the same altar to God, (it is bishop Hall's observation) but utterly demolish it; God first *commands down the monuments of superstition*, and then *enjoins his own service*. He must likewise *cut down the grove that was by it*, the plantation of young trees, designed to beautify the place. The learned bishop Patrick, by the grove, understands the image in the grove, probably the image of Ashtaroth (for the word for a grove is Asherah) which stood upon, or close by, the altar. (2.) To erect an altar to God, *to Jehovah his God*; which probably was to be notified by an inscription upon the altar to that purpose; to Jehovah, Gideon's God, or Israel's. It had been an ill thing for him to have built an altar, even to the God of Israel, especially for burnt-offering and sacrifice, and would have been construed a contempt of the altar at Shiloh, if God had not bid him do it, who has not tied up himself to his own laws. But now it was his duty, and an honour to be thus employed. God directs him to the place where he should build it, on the *top of the rock*, perhaps at the same place in which the angel had appeared to him, near to the altar he had already built: and he must not do it in a hurry, but with the decency that became a religious action in an orderly manner, as it is in the margin, according to the ancient law for extempore altars, that they must be of earth, not of hewn stone. The word here used for the rock on which the altar was to be built, signifies a fortress, or strong-hold, some think erected to secure them from the Midianites; if so, it was no security while the altar of Baal was so near it, but it was effectually fortified, when an altar to the Lord was built on the top of it, for that is the best defence upon our glory. On this altar, 1. He was to offer sacrifice. Two bullocks he must offer; his father's *young bullock*, and the *second bullock of seven years old*; so it should rather be read, not even the second, as we read it. The former we may suppose he was to offer for himself, the latter *for the sins of the people*, whom he was to deliver. It was requisite he should thus make peace with God, before he made war on Midian. Till sin be pardoned through the great sacrifice, no good is to be expected. These bullocks, it is supposed, were intended for sacrifices on the altar of Baal, but were now converted to a better use. Thus when the *strong man armed* is overcome, and dispossessed, the stronger than he divides the spoil; seizeth that for himself, *which they prepared for Baal*; let him come, *whose right it is*, and *give it him*. 2. Baal's grove, or image, or whatever it was, that was the sanctity or beauty of his altar, must not be burnt, but must be used as fuel for God's altar, to signify, that whatever sets up itself in opposition to God, shall not only be destroyed, but the justice of God will be glorified in its destruction. God ordered Gideon to do this, (1.) To try his zeal for religion, which it was necessary he should give proofs of before he took the field, to give proofs of his valour there. (2.) That some steps might hereby be taken towards Israel's reformation, which must prepare the way for their deliverance. Sin, the cause, must be taken away, else how should the trouble come to an end, which was but the effect? And it might be hoped that this example of Gideon's, who was now shortly to appear so great a man, would be followed by the rest of the cities and tribes, and the destruction of this one altar of Baal would be the destruction of many.

2. Gideon was *obedient to the heavenly vision*, ver. 27. He that was to command the Israel of God, must be subject to the God of Israel, without disputing; and as a type of Christ, must first *save his people from their sins*, and then save them from their enemies. (1.) He had servants of his own, whom he could confide in, who, we may suppose, like him, had kept their integrity, and *had not bowed the knee to Baal*, and therefore were forward to assist him in destroying the altar of Baal. (2.) He did not scruple taking his father's bullock, and offering him to God without his father's consent, because God, who expressly commanded him to do so, had a better title to it than his father had, and it was the greatest real kindness he could do his father to prevent his sin. (3.) He expected to incur the displeasure of his father's household by it, and the ill-will of his neighbours, yet he did it, remembering how much it was Levi's praise, that, in the cause of God, *He said to his father and mother, I have not seen him*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. And while he was sure of the favour of God, he feared not the anger of men; he that bid him do it, would bear him out. Yet, (4.) Tho' he feared not their resentments when it was done, to prevent their resistance in the doing of it, he prudently chose to do it by night, that he might not be disturbed in these sacred actions. And some think it was the same night in which God spake to him to do it; and that as soon as ever he had received the orders, he immediately applied himself to the execution of them, and finished before morning.

3. He was brought into peril of his life for doing it, ver. 28, 29, 30. (1.) It was soon discovered what was done. Gideon, when he had gone through with the business, did not desire the concealment of it, nor could it be hid, for the men of the city *rose early in the morning*, as it should seem, to say their mattins at Baal's altar, and so to begin the day with their god, such a one as he was; a shame to those, who say the true God is their God,

and yet, in the morning direct no prayer to him, or look up. (2.) It was soon discovered who had done it. Strict enquiry was made, Gideon was known to be disaffected to the worship of Baal, which brought him into suspicion; and positive proof presently came against him, Gideon no doubt *has done this thing*. (3.) Being found guilty of the fact, to such a pitch of impiety were these degenerate Israelites arrived, that they take it for law, he must die for the same; and require his own father (who by patronizing their idolatry, had given them too much cause to expect he would comply with them herein) to deliver him up. *Bring out thy son that he may die*. Be astonished, O heavens at this, and tremble, O earth! By the law of God, the worshippers of Baal were to die, but these wicked men impiously turn the penalty upon the worshippers of the God of Israel. How prodigiously mad were they upon their idols! was it not enough to offer the choicest of their bullocks to Baal, but must the bravest young gentleman of their city fall as a sacrifice to that dunghill-deity, when they pretended he was provoked? How soon will idolaters become persecutors?

4. He was rescued out of the hands of his persecutors by his own father, ver. 31. (1.) There were these that stood against Gideon, not only appeared at the first to make a demand, but insisted on it, and would have him put to death. Notwithstanding the heavy judgments they were at this time under for their idolatry, yet they hated to be reformed, and walked contrary to God, then when he was walking contrary to them. (2.) Yet then *Joash stood for him*, he was one of the chief men of the city; those that have power may do a great deal for the protection of an honest man, and an honest cause, and when they so use their power, they are ministers of God for good. This Joash had patronized Baal's altar, yet now protects him that had destroyed it, either, (1.) Out of natural affection to his son, and perhaps a particular esteem for him, as a virtuous, valiant, valuable young man, and never the worse for not joining with him in the worship of Baal. Many that have not courage enough to keep their integrity themselves, yet have so much conscience left, as makes them love and esteem those that do. If Joash had a kindness for Baal, yet he had a greater kindness for his son. Or, (2.) Out of a care for the publick peace. The mob grew riotous, and he feared would grow more so, and therefore, as some think, he bestirred himself to repress the tumult; let it be left to the judges, it is not for you to pass sentence upon any man, he that offers it, *let him be put to death*, he means, not as an idolater, but as a perturbator of the peace, and the mover of sedition. Under this same colour, Paul was rescued at Ephesus, from those that were as zealous for Diana, as these here for Baal, Acts xix. 40. Or, (3.) Out of a conviction that Gideon had done well. His son perhaps had reasoned with him, or God, who has all hearts in his hands, had secretly and effectually influenced him to appear thus against the advocates for Baal, tho' he had complied with them formerly in the worship of Baal. Note, It is good to appear for God when we are called to it, tho' there be few or none to second us, because God can incline the hearts of those to stand by us, from whom we little expect it. Let us do our duty, and then trust God with our safety. Two things Joash urgeth. (1.) That it was absurd for them to plead for Baal. Will you that are Israelites, the worshippers of the one only living and true God, plead for Baal, a false god? Will you be so sottish, so senseless? They whose fathers god Baal was, and that never knew any other, are more excusable in pleading for him than you are, that are in covenant with Jehovah, and have been trained up in the knowledge of him. You that have smarted so much for worshipping Baal, and have brought all this mischief and calamity upon your selves by it, will you yet plead for Baal? Note, It is bad to commit sin, but it is great wickedness indeed to plead for it, especially to plead for Baal, that idol, whatever it is which possesseth that room in the heart which God should have. (2.) That it was needless for them to plead for Baal; if he were not a god, as was pretended, they could have nothing to say for him, if he were, he was able to plead for himself, as the God of Israel had often done by fire from heaven, or some other judgment against those who put contempt upon him. Here is a fair challenge to Baal, to *do either good or evil*, and the result convinced his worshippers of their folly, in praying to one to help them that could not avenge himself; after this Gideon remarkably prospered, and thereby it appeared how unable Baal was to maintain his own cause. Lastly, Gideon's father hereupon gave him a new name, ver. 32. he called him Jerubbaal, let Baal plead, let him plead against him, if he can; if he have any thing to say for himself against his destroyer, let him say it. This name was a standing defiance to Baal, now Gideon was taking up arms against the Midianites that worshipped Baal, let him defend his worshippers if he can; it likewise gave honour to Gideon, a sworn enemy to that great usurper, and that had carried the day against him, and encouragement to his soldiers, that they fought under one that fought for God, against that great competitor with him for the throne. It is the probable conjecture of the learned, that that Jerombalus, whom Sanchoniathon (one of the most ancient of all the heathen writers) speaks of as a *priest of the god Jao*, (a corruption of the name Jehovah) and one to whom he was indebted for a great

deal of knowledge, was this Jerubbal. He is called Jerubbeseth, 2 Sam. xi. 21. Baal a lord, being fitly turned into Besheth, shame.

33. ¶ Then all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. 34. But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered after him. 35. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him, and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali, and they came up to meet them. 36. ¶ And Gideon said unto God, if thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, 37. Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. 38. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. 39. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. 40. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Here is, 1. The descent which the enemies of Israel made upon them, ver. 33. A vast number of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians, got together, and came over Jordan, none either caring, or daring, to guard that important and advantageous pass against them, and they made their head-quarters in the valley of Jezreel, in the heart of Manasseh's tribe, not far from Gideon's city. Some think the notice they had of Gideon's destroying Baal's altar brought them over, and that they came to plead for Baal, and to make that a pretence of quarrelling with Israel; but it is more likely that it was now harvest-time, when they had been wont each year to make them such a visit as this, ver. 3. and were expected when Gideon was threshing, ver. 11. God raised up Gideon to be ready against this terrible blow came. Their success so many years in these incursions, the little opposition they had met with, and the great booty they had carried off, made them now both very eager, and very confident, but it proved the measure of their iniquity was full, the year of recompence was come, they must now make an end to spoil, and must be spoiled, and they are gathered as sheaves to the floor, Mic. iv. 12, 13. for Gideon to thresh.

2. The preparation which Gideon makes to attack them in their camp, ver. 34, 35. (1.) God by his spirit put life into Gideon, the spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon, so the word is, clothed him as a robe to put honour upon him; clothed him as a coat of mail, to put a defence upon him. Those are well clad that are thus clothed. A spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon; so the Chaldee. He was of himself a mighty man of valour, yet personal strength and courage, tho' vigorously exerted, would not suffice for this great action, he must have the armour of God upon him, and that is it that he must depend upon, the spirit of the Lord clothed him in an extraordinary manner, whom God calls to his work, he will spirit for it. (2.) Gideon with his trumpet put life into his neighbours, God working with him; he blew a trumpet, to call in volunteers, and more came in than perhaps he expected. 1. The men of Abiezer, tho' lately enraged against him for throwing down the altar of Baal, and condemning him to death as a criminal, were now convinced of their error, bravely came in to his assistance, and submitted to him as their general, Abiezer was gathered after him, ver. 34. So suddenly can God turn the hearts, even of idolaters and persecutors. 2. Distant tribes, even Asher and Naphtali, which lay most remote, tho' strangers to him obeyed his summons, and sent him in the best of their forces, ver. 35. Tho' they lay further from the danger, yet considering, that if their neighbours were over-run by the Midianites, their own turn would be next, they were forward to join against a common enemy.

3. The signs which God gratified him with, for the confirming both of his own faith, and of his followers, and perhaps it was more for their sakes, than for his own, that he desired them. Or, perhaps he desired by these to be satisfied, whether this was the time of his conquering the Midianites, or whether he was to wait some other opportunity. Observe, 1. His request for a sign, ver. 36, 37. Let me by this know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, let a fleece of wool spread in the open air, be wet with the dew, and let the ground about it be dry. The purport of this is, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. He found his own faith weak and wavering, and therefore begged of God by this sign to perfect what was lacking in it. We may suppose

God, who intended to give him these signs, for the glorifying of his own power and goodness, put it into his heart to ask them. Yet when he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with a very humble apology, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so like a peevish humourous distrust of God, and dissatisfaction with the many assurances he had already given him, ver. 39. Let not thine anger be hot against me. Tho' he took the boldness to ask another sign, yet he did it with such fear and trembling, as shewed the familiarity God had graciously admitted him to, did not breed any contempt of God's glory, or presumption on God's goodness. Abraham had given him an example of this, when God gave him leave to be very free with him, Gen. xviii. 30, 32. O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. God's favour must be sought with great reverence, due sense of our distance, and a religious fear of his wrath. 2. God's gracious grant of his request. See how tender God is of true believers, tho' they be weak, and how ready to condescend to their infirmities, that the bruised reed may not be broken, nor the smoking flax quenched. Gideon would have the fleece wet, and the ground dry; but then, lest any should object, it is natural for wool, if never so little moisture fall, to drink it in, and retain it, and therefore there was nothing extraordinary in that, tho' the quantity wrung out was sufficient to obviate that objection, yet he desires that next night the ground might be wet, and the fleece dry, and it is done, so willing is God to give to the heirs of promise strong consolation, (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) even by two immutable things. He suffers himself, not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but even to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions.

These signs were, (1.) Truly miraculous, and therefore abundantly serving to confirm his commission. It is said of the dew, that it is from the Lord, and tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Mic. v. 7. And yet God here in this matter hearkened to the voice of a man; as to Joshua, in directing the course of the sun, so to Gideon, in directing that of the dew, by which it appears, that it falls not by chance, but providence. The latter sign inverted the former, and to please Gideon, it was wrought backward and forward; whence Dr Fuller observes, that heaven's real miracles will endure turning, being inside and outside, both alike. (2.) Very significant. He and his men were going to engage the Midianites, could God distinguish between a small fleece of Israel, and the vast floor of Midian? Yes, by this he is made to know that he can. Is Gideon desirous that the dew of divine grace might descend upon himself in particular, he sees the fleece wet with dew to assure him of it? Doth he desire that God will be as the dew to all Israel? Behold, all the ground is wet. Some make this fleece an emblem of the Jewish nation, which, when time was, was wet with the dew of God's word and ordinances, while the rest of the world was dry. But since the rejection of Christ and his gospel, they are dry as the heath in the wilderness, while the nations about are as a watered garden.

C H A P. VII.

This chapter presents us with Gideon in the field, commanding the army of Israel, and routing the army of Midianites, for which great exploit we found in the former chapter how he was prepared by his converse with God, and his conquest of Baal. We are here told, 1. What direction God gave to Gideon for the modelling of his army, by which it was reduced to three hundred men, ver. 1—8. 2. What encouragement God gave to Gideon to attack the enemy, by sending him incognito into their camp to hear a Midianite tell his dream, ver. 9—15. 3. How he formed his attack upon the enemy's camp with his three hundred men, not to fight them, but to frighten them, ver. 16—20. 4. The success of this attack, it put them to flight, and gave them a total rout, the disbanded forces, and other their neighbours, then coming in to his assistance, ver. 21—25. It is a story that shines very bright in the book of the wars of the Lord.

1. **T**HEN Jerubbaal (who is Gideon) and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north-side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. 2. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee, are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. 3. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead: and there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand. 4. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many: bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee,

thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. 5. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6. And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. 7. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place. 8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel, every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred Men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

Here, 1. Gideon applies himself with all possible care and industry to do the part of a good general, in leading on the hosts of Israel against the Midianites, *ver. 1. He rose up early*, as one whose heart was upon his business, and who was afraid of losing time. Now he is sure God is with him, he is impatient of delay. He pitched near a famous well, that his army might not be distressed for want of water, and gained the higher ground, which possibly might be some advantage to him, for the Midianites *were beneath him in the valley*. Note, Faith in God's promises must not slacken, but rather quicken our endeavours. When we are sure God goes before us, then we must bestir ourselves, 2 *Sam. v. 24.*

2. God provides that the praise of the intended victory may be reserved wholly to himself, by appointing three hundred men only to be employed in this service. The army consisted of thirty-two thousand men, a small army, in comparison with what Israel might have raised upon so great an occasion, and a very small one, in comparison with what the Midianites had now brought into the field; Gideon was ready to think them too few, but God comes to him, and tells him they were *too many*, *ver. 2.* Not but that they did well, who offered themselves willingly to this expedition, but God saw fit not to make use of all that came. We often find God bringing great things to pass by a few hands, but this was the only time that he purposely made them fewer. Had Deborah lately blamed those who *came not to the help of the Lord*, and yet in the next great action must they be turned off that do come? Yes, 1. God would hereby shew, that when he employed likely instruments in his service, he did not need them, but could do his work without them. So that he was not indebted to them for their service, but they to him for employing them. 2. He would hereby put them to shame for their cowardise, who had tamely submitted to the Midianites, and durst not make head against them, because of the disproportion of their numbers: They now saw, if they had but made sure the favour of God, one of them might have chased a thousand. 3. He would hereby silence and exclude boasting: that is the reason here given by him, who knows the pride that is in mens hearts, *lest Israel vaunt themselves against me*. Justly were they denied the honour of the service, who would not give God the honour of the success. *Mine own hand hath saved me*, is a word that must never come out of the mouth of such as shall be saved. *He that glories, must glory in the Lord*, and all flesh must be silent before him.

Two ways God took to lessen their numbers,

1. He ordered all that would own themselves timorous and faint-hearted to be dismissed, *ver. 3.* He was now encamped on a mountain close to the enemy, called mount Gilead, from Gilead, the common ancestor of these families of Manasseh, which were seated on this side Jordan, *Numb. xxvi. 30.* And from thence they might see perhaps the vast numbers of the enemy; these therefore who were disheartened at the sight, were left to their liberty to go back if they pleased. There was a law for making such a proclamation as this, *Deut. xx. 8.* But Gideon perhaps thought that concerned only those wars which were undertaken for the enlarging of their coast, not as this for their necessary defence against an invader, therefore Gideon had not proclaimed this, if God had not commanded him, who knew how his forces would hereby be diminished. Cowards would be as likely as any after the victory to take the honour of it from God, and therefore God would not do them the honour to employ them in it. One would have thought there had been scarce one Israelite to be found, that against such an enemy as the Midianites, and under such a leader as Gideon, would have owned himself fearful, yet above two parts of three took the advantage of this proclamation, and filed off, when they saw the strength of the enemy, and their own weakness, not considering the assurances of the divine presence which their general had received of the Lord, and it is likely delivered unto them. Some think the oppression they had been under so long had broke their spirits, others, more probably, that conscious of their own guilt had deprived them of their courage. Sin

stared them in the face, and therefore they durst not look death in the face. Note, Fearful, faint-hearted people are not fit to be employed for God, and among those that are lifted under the banner of Christ, there are more such than we think there are.

2. He directed the cashiering of all that remained, but three hundred men, and he did it by a sign. *The people are yet too many*, for me to make use of, *ver. 4.* See how much God's thoughts and ways are above ours: Gideon himself, it is likely, thought they were quite too few; tho' they were as many as Barak encountered Sisera with, *chap. iv. 14.* and had he not forced his way through the discouragement by dint of faith, he himself would have started back from so hazardous an enterprise, and here made the best of his own way back: but God faith they are *many*, and when diminished to a third part, they are yet *too many*, which may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church, and its interests; its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by, God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be *exalted in his own strength*.

Gideon is ordered to bring his soldiers to the watering, probably to the well of Herod, (*ver. 1.*) and the stream that run from it; he, or some appointed by him, must observe how they drank. We must suppose they were all thirsty, and had a mind to drink, it is likely he told them they must prepare to enter upon action presently, and therefore must refresh themselves accordingly, not expecting after this to drink any thing else but the blood of their enemies. Now, (1.) Some, and no doubt the most, would kneel down on their knees to drink, and put their mouths to the water as horses do, and so they might get their full draught. (2.) Others it may be would not make such a formal business of it, but as a dog laps with his tongue, a lap and away, so they would hastily take up a little water in their hands, and cool their mouths with that, and be gone. Three hundred and no more there were of this latter sort, that drank in haste, and by those God tells Gideon he would rout the Midianites, *ver. 7.* By the former distinction none were retained but hearty men, that were resolved to do their utmost for the retrieve of the liberties of Israel, but by this further distinction it was provided that none should be made use of but, (1.) Men that were hardy, that could endure a long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness, that had not in them any dregs either of sloth or luxury. (2.) Men that were hasty, that thought it long until they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshments, such as these God chooses to employ, that are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing. And also because these were the fewer number, and therefore the least likely to effect what they were designed for, God would by them save Israel. It was a great trial to the faith and courage of Gideon, when God bid him let all the rest of the people but these three hundred *go every man to his place*, i. e. go where they pleased out of his call, and from under his command; yet we may suppose those that were hearty in the cause, tho' now set aside, did not go so far out of hearing, but that they were ready to follow the blow, when the three hundred had broke the ice; tho' that doth not appear.

Thus strangely was Gideon's army purged and modelled, and reduced, instead of being recruited, as one would think in so great an action it both needed and deserved to be. Now let us see how this little despicable regiment, on which the stress of the action must lie, were accoutred, and fitted out. Had these three hundred been double manned with servants and attendants, and double armed with swords and spears, we would have thought them the more likely to bring something to pass. But instead of making them more serviceable by their equipment they are made less so. For, 1. Every soldier turns suttler, they *took victuals in their hand*, *ver. 8.* left their bag and baggage behind, and every man burthened himself with his own provision, which was a trial of their faith whether they could trust God, when they had no more provisions with them than they could carry, and a trial of their diligence, whether they would carry as much as they had occasion for. This was indeed living from hand to mouth. 2. Every soldier turns trumpeter. The regiments that were cashiered left their trumpets behind them for the use of those three hundred men, who were furnished with those instead of weapons of war, as if they had been going rather to a game than to a battle.

9. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host, for I have delivered it into thine hand. 10. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host. 11. And thou shalt hear what they say, and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host. 12. And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. 13. And when Gideon

Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. 14. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. 15. ¶ And it was *so* when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise, for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Gideon's army being diminished as we have found it was, he must either fight by faith or not at all; God therefore here provides recruits for his faith, instead of recruits for his forces.

1. He furnishes him with a good foundation to build his faith upon; nothing but a word from God will be footing for faith. He hath that as full and express as he can desire, *ver. 9.* A word of command to warrant the action, which otherwise seemed rash, and indiscreet, and unbecoming a wise general, *Arise, get thee down* with this handful of men *unto the host*; and a word of promise to assure him of the success, which otherwise seemed very improbable, *I have delivered it into thine hand*, it is all thine own. This *word of the Lord* came to him the same night, when he was (we may suppose) full of care, and in a mighty toss how he should come off, *in the multitude of his thoughts within him these comforts did delight his soul.* Divine consolations are given in to believers, not only strongly but seasonably.

2. He furnisheth him with a good prop to support his faith with. (1.) He orders him to be his own spy, and now in the dead of the night to go down privately, into the host of Midian, and see what intelligence he could gain. *If thou fear to go down to fight, go first only with thine own servant, ver. 10. and hear what they say, ver. 11.* and it is intimated to him he should hear that which would be a great strengthening to his faith. God knows the infirmities of his people, and what great encouragement they may sometimes take from a small matter, and therefore knowing beforehand what would occur to Gideon, in that very part of the camp to which he would go down, he orders him to go down and hearken what they said, that he might the more firmly believe what God said. He must take with him *Phurah his servant*, one that he could confide in, probably one of the ten that had helped him to break down the altar of Baal; he must take him and no one else with him, must take him with him to be a witness of what he should hear the Midianites say, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses, when the matter came to be reported to Israel, the word might be established. He must take his servant with him, because two is better than one, and a little help better than none. (2.) Being so he orders him the sight of something that was discouraging. 1. It was enough to frighten him to discern perhaps by moon-light the vast numbers of the enemy, *ver. 12.* the men like grasshoppers for multitude, and they proved no better than grasshoppers for strength and courage; the camels one could not count no more than the sand. But, 2. He heard that which was to him a very good omen; and which when he had heard, he went back again presently, supposing he now had what he was sent thither for. He overheard two soldiers of the enemy, that were comrades, talking, probably they were in bed together, waking in the night. (1.) One of them tells his dream, and (as our dreams generally are bad, and therefore not worthy telling again) it was a very foolish one. He dreamed that he saw a barley cake come hopping down the hill, into the camp of the Midianites, and methought (saith he, for so we use to tell our dreams) this tumbling cake struck one of our tents, (perhaps one of the chief of their tents) and with such violence that (would you think it?) it overturned the tent, forced down the stakes, and broke the cords at one blow, so that the tent lay along and buried its inhabitants, *ver. 13.* *In multitudes of dreams there are divers vanities*, saith Solomon, *Eccl. v. 7.* One would wonder what odd incoherent things are oft put together by a ludicrous fancy in our dreams. (2.) The other, it may be, between sleep and wake, undertakes to interpret this dream, and the interpretation is very far fetched. *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, ver. 14.* Our expositors now can tell us how apt the resemblance was; that Gideon who had threshed corn for his family, and made cakes for his friend, *chap. vi. 11, 19.* was fitly represented by a cake: that he and his army were as inconsiderable as a cake made of a little flour, as contemptible as a barley cake, hastily got together, as a cake suddenly baked upon the coals, and as unlikely to conquer this great army, as a cake to overthrow a tent. But after all, *do not interpretations belong to God?* He put it into the head of the one to dream, and into the mouth of the other to give the sense of it; if Gideon had heard the dream only, and he and his servant had been to interpret it themselves, it had so little significance in it, that it would have done him little service, but having the interpretation from the mouth of an enemy, it not only appeared to come from God, who has all mens hearts and tongues in his hand, No. xviii.

but it was likewise an evidence that the enemy was quite dispirited, and that the name of Gideon was become so formidable to them, that it disturbed their sleep. The victory would easily be won, which was already so tamely yielded, *into his hand hath God delivered Midian.* Those were not likely to fight who saw God fighting against them.

Gideon observing the finger of God pointing him to that very place, at that very time, to hear this dream and the interpretation of it, was exceedingly encouraged by it against the melancholy apprehensions he had upon the reducing of his army. He was very well pleased to hear himself compared to a barley cake, when it proved to effect such great things. Being hereby animated, we are told, *ver. 15.* (1.) How he gave God the glory of it, he worshipped immediately, bowed his head, or it may be lift up his eyes and hands, and in a short ejaculation thanked God for the victory he was now sure of, and for this encouragement to expect it. Wherever we are we may speak to God, and worship him, and find away open heavenwards. God must have the praise of that which is encouraging to our faith. And his providence must be acknowledged in those events, which though minute and seemingly accidental prove serviceable to us. (2.) How he gave his friends a share in the encouragements he had received. *Arise, prepare to march presently, the Lord has delivered Midian into your hand.*

16. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every mans hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. 17. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be, *that as I do, so shall ye do.* 18. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.* 19. ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands. 20. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.* 21. And they stood every man in his place, round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. 22. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every mans sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meolah, unto Tabbath.

- Here is, 1. The brave alarm which Gideon gave to the host of Midian in the dead time of the night, for it was intended that they which had so long been a terror to Israel, and had so often frightened them, should themselves be routed and ruined purely by terror. The attack here made was in divers circumstances, like that which Abraham made upon the army that had taken Lot captive; the number of men much the same, Abraham had three hundred and eighteen, Gideon three hundred; they both divided their forces, both made their attack by night, and were both victorious under great disadvantages, *Gen. xiv. 14, 15.* and Gideon is not only a son of Abraham, so were the Midianites by Keturah, but an heir of his faith. Gideon (1.) divided his army, as small as it was, into three battalions, *ver. 16.* one of which he himself commanded, *ver. 19.* because great armies (and such a one he would make a shew of) use to be divided into the right wing, the left wing, and the body of the army. (2.) He ordered them all to do as he did, *ver. 17.* He told them now, it is very likely, what they must do, else the thing was so odd they would scarce have done it of a sudden, but he would by doing it first, give notice to them when to do it, as officers exercise their soldiers with the word of command, or by beat of drum. *Look on me, and do likewise*, such is the word of command; our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, gives his soldiers, for he has *left us an example*, with a charge to follow it, *as I do so shall ye do.* (3.) He made his descent in the night, when they were secure, and least expected it, which would put them into a mighty consternation; and when the smallness of his army would not be discovered; in the night all frights are most frightful; especially in the dead of the night, as this was, a little after midnight, when the middle watch began, and the alarm would wake them out of their sleep. We read of *terror by night* as very terrible, *Psal. xci. 5.* and *fear in the night*, *Cant. iii. 8.* (4.) That which Gideon aimed at, was to frighten this huge host, to give them not only a fatal rout, but a very shameful one. He accoutred his army with every man a trumpet in his right-hand, and an earthen pitcher, with a torch in it in his left, and

and he himself thought it no disparagement to him, to march before them thus armed. He would make but a jest of conquering this army, and goes out against them rather as against a company of children, than of soldiers, *The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn*, Isa. xxxvii. 22. The fewness of his men favoured his design, for being so few they marched to the camp with the greater secrecy and expedition; so that they were not discovered till they were close by the camp; and he contrived to give the alarm when they had newly mounted the guards, ver. 19. that the centinels being then wakeful, might the sooner disperse the alarm through the camp, which was the best service they could do him.

Three ways Gideon contrived to strike a terror upon this army, and so put them into confusion. 1. With a great noise, every man must blow his trumpet in the most terrible manner he could, and clatter an earthen pitcher to pieces at the same time; probably, each dashed his pitcher to his next man's, and so they were broken both together, which would not only make a great crash, but was a figure of what would be the effects of the fright, even the Midianites killing one another. 2. With a great blaze. The lighted torches were hid in the pitchers, like *a candle under a bushel*, until they came to the camp, and then being taken out all together of a sudden, would make a glaring shew, and run through the camp like a flash of lightning. Perhaps with these they set some of the tents in the outside of the camp on fire, which would very much increase the confusion. 3. With a great shout. Every man must cry, *For the Lord, and for Gideon*, so some think it should be read, ver. 18. for there the sword is not in the original, but it is, ver. 20. *The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*. It should seem he borrowed the word from the Midianite's dream, ver. 14. it is *the sword of Gideon*; finding his name was a terror to them, he thus improves it against them; but prefixes the name of Jehovah, as the figure, without which his own was but an insignificant cypher. This would put life into his own men, who might well take courage, when they had such a God as Jehovah, and such a man as Gideon both to *fight for*, and to *fight for them*: Well might they follow, who had such leaders. It would likewise put their enemies into a fright, who had of old heard of Jehovah's great name, and of late of Gideon's. The sword of the Lord is all in all to the success of the sword of Gideon, yet the sword of Gideon must be employed. Men the instruments, and God the principal agent, must both be considered in their places, but men the greatest and best always in subserviency and subordination to God. This army was to be defeated purely by terrors, and those are especially the *sword of the Lord*. These soldiers, if they had swords by their sides, that was all, they had none in their hands, but they gained the victory by shouting, the sword, so the church's enemies are routed by *a sword out of the mouth*, Rev. xix. 21.

Now this method here taken of defeating the Midianites may be alluded to, 1. As typifying the destruction of the Devil's kingdom in the world, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the sounding of that trumpet, and the holding forth of that light out of earthen vessels, for such the ministers of the gospel are, in whom the *treasure of that light* is deposited, 2 Cor. iv. 6, 7. Thus God chose the *foolish things of the world to confound the wise*, a barley cake to overthrow the tents of Midian, that the *excellency of the power might be of God only*; the gospel is a sword, not in the hand, but in the mouth, the *sword of the Lord and of Gideon*; of God and Jesus Christ, him that sits on the throne and the Lamb. 2. As representing the terrors of the great day. So the excellent bishop Hall applies it; if these pitchers, trumpets, and firebrands, did so daunt and dismay the proud troops of Midian and Amalek, who shall be able to stand before the last terror, when the trumpet of the arch-angel shall sound, the elements shall be on a flame, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the Lord himself shall descend with a shout.

2. The wonderful success of this alarm. The Midianites were shouted out of their lives, as the walls of Jericho were shouted down, that Gideon might see what he lately despaired of ever seeing, the *wonders that their fathers told them of*. Gideon's soldiers observed their orders, and *stood every man in his place round about the camp*, ver. 21. sounding his trumpet to excite them to fight one another, and holding out his torch to light them to their ruin. They did not rush into the host of Midian, as greedy either of blood or spoil, but patiently stood still to *see the salvation of the Lord*, a salvation purely of his own working. Observe how the design took effect.

1. They feared the Israelites, *all the host* presently took the alarm, it flew like lightning through all their lines, and *they ran, and cried, and fled*, ver. 21. There was something natural in this fright, we may suppose they had not had intelligence of the great diminution of Gideon's army, but rather concluded that since their last advices it had been growing greater and greater; and therefore had reason to suspect, knowing how odious and grievous they had made themselves, and what bold steps had been taken towards the throwing off of their yoke, that it was a very great army which was to be ushered in with all those trumpeters and torch-bearers; but there was more of a supernatural power impressing this terror upon them; God himself gave it the setting on, to shew how that promise should have been ful-

filled if they had not forfeited it, *One of you shall chase a thousand*. See the power of imagination, and how much it may become a terror at some times, as at other times it is a pleasure.

2. They fell foul upon one another, ver. 22. *The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow*. In this confusion, observing the trumpeters and torch-bearers to stand still without their camp, they concluded the body of the army had already entered, and was in their bowels, and therefore every one run at the next he met, tho' a friend, supposing him an enemy, and one such mistake as that would occasion many, for then he that slew him would certainly be taken for an enemy, and would be dispatched presently. It is our interest to preserve such a command of our own spirits, as never to *be afraid with any amazement*, for we cannot conceive what mischiefs we thereby plunge our selves in. See also how God often makes the enemies of his church instruments to destroy one another; it is pity the church's friends should ever be thus infatuated.

3. They fled for their lives. Perhaps when day-light came, they were sensible of their mistake in fighting with one another, and concluded that by this fatal error they had so weakened themselves, that now it was impossible to make any head against Israel, and therefore made the best of their way towards their own country, tho' for ought appears the three hundred men kept their ground. *The wicked flees when none pursues*, Prov. xxviii. 1. *Terrors make him afraid on every side, and drive him to his feet*, Job xviii. 11.

23. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. 24. ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. 25. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine-press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb, to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

We have here the prosecution of this glorious victory.

1. Gideon's soldiers that had been dismissed, and perhaps had begun to disperse themselves, upon notice of the enemies flight got together again, and vigorously pursued them whom they had not courage to face. The men of Israel out of Naphtali and Asher who did this, ver. 23. were not such as now came from those distant countries, but the same that had lifted themselves, chap. vi. 35. but had been cashiered. They who were fearful and afraid to fight, ver. 3. now took heart, when the worst was over, and were ready enough to divide the spoil, tho' backward to make the onset. They also that might not fight, tho' they had a mind to it, and were disbanded by order from God, did not as those, 2 Chron. xxv. 10, 13. *return in great anger*, but waited for an opportunity of doing service in pursuing the victory, tho' they were denied the honour of helping to force the lines.

2. The Ephraimites upon summons from Gideon, came in unanimously, and secured the passes over Jordan, by the several fords, to cut off the enemies retreat into their own country, that they might be entirely destroyed to prevent the like mischief to Israel another time. Now they had begun to fall, down with them, *Eph. vi. 13. They took the waters*, ver. 24. i. e. posted themselves along the river side, so that the Midianites, who fled from those who pursued them, fell into the hand of those that waited to intercept them. Here was *fear, and the pit, and the snare*, Isa. xxiv. 17.

3. Two of the chief commanders of the host of Midian were taken and slain by the Ephraimites, on this side Jordan, ver. 25. Their names perhaps signified their nature, Oreb signifies a raven, and Zeeb a wolf (*Corvinus* and *Lupus*). These in their flight had taken shelter, one in a rock, (*Isa. ii. 21. Rev. vi. 15.*) the other by a wine-press (as Gideon, for fear of them, had lately hid his corn by a wine-press, chap. vi. 11). But the places of their shelter were made the places of their slaughter, and the memory of it preserved to posterity in the names of the places, to their perpetual infamy; *Here fell the princes of Midian*.

CHAP. VIII.

This chapter gives us a farther account of Gideon's victory over the Midianites, with the residue of the story of his life and government. (1.) Gideon prudently pacifieth the offended Ephraimites, ver. 1—3. (2.) He bravely pursues the flying Midianites, ver. 4, 10—12. (3.) He justly chastizeth the insolence of the men of Succoth and Peniel, who basely abused him, ver. 5—9, and were reckoned with for it, ver. 13—17. (4.) He honourably slays the two kings of Midian, ver. 18—21. (5.) After all this

be modestly declines the government of Israel, ver. 22, 23. (6.) He foolishly gratified the superstitious humour of his people, by setting up an ephod in his own city, which proves a great snare, ver. 24—27. (7.) He kept the country quiet forty years, ver. 28. (8.) He died in honour, and left a numerous family behind him, ver. 29—32. (9.) Both he and his God were soon forgotten by ungrateful Israel, ver. 33—35.

1. **A**ND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply. 2. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3. God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

No sooner were the Midianites, the common enemy, subdued, but, through the violence of some hot spirits the children of Israel are ready to quarrel among themselves; an unhappy spark was struck, which, if Gideon had not with a great deal of wisdom and grace extinguished presently, might have broke out into a flame of fatal consequence. The Ephraimites, when they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon as general, instead of congratulating his successes, and addressing him with thanks for his great services, as they ought to have done, picked a quarrel with him, and grew very hot upon it.

1. Their accusation was very peevish and unreasonable, *Why didst thou not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?* ver. 1. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, Gideon's tribe, and had had the preeminence in Jacob's blessing, and in Moses's, and therefore was very jealous of Manasseh, lest that tribe should at any time eclipse the honour of theirs: Hence we find Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, *Isa. ix. 21. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle*, Prov. xviii. 19. But how unjust was their quarrel with Gideon? They were angry he did not send for them to begin the attack upon Midian, but only to follow the blow: Why were not they called to lead the van? The post of honour they thought belonged to them: But, 1. Gideon was called of God, and must act as he directed; he neither took the honour to himself, nor did he dispose of honours himself, but left it to God to do all. So that the Ephraimites in this quarrel reflected upon the divine conduct, and what was Gideon that they murmured against him? (2.) Why did not the Ephraimites offer themselves willingly to the service. They knew the enemy was in their country, and had heard of the forces that were raising to oppose them, to which they ought to have joined themselves, in zeal for the common cause, tho' they had not a formal invitation. Those seek themselves more than God, that stand upon a point of honour, to excuse themselves from doing real service to God and their generation. In Deborah's time there was a *riot of Ephraim*, chap. v. 14. Why did not that appear now? The case it self called them, they needed not wait for a call from Gideon. (3.) Gideon had saved their credit in not calling them; if he had sent for them in, no doubt many of them would have gone back with the faint-hearted, or been dismissed with the lazy lubberly drinkers; so that by not calling them, he prevented the putting of those flurs upon them. Cowards will seem valiant when the danger is over, but those consult their reputation who try not their courage when danger is near.

2. Gideon's answer was very calm and peaceable, and was intended not so much to justify himself, as to please and pacify them, ver. 2, 3. He answers them, 1. With a great deal of meekness and temper, did not resent the affront, nor answer anger with anger, but mildly reasons the case with them, and he won as true honour by this command which he had over his own passion, as by his victory over the Midianites; *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty*. 2. With a great deal of modesty and humility, magnifying their performances above his own. *Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim*, who picked up the stragglers of the enemy, and cut off those of them that escaped, *better than the vintage of Abiezer*, a greater honour to them, and better service to the country than the first attack Gideon made upon them? The destruction of the church's enemies is compared to a vintage, *Rev. xiv. 18*. In this he owns their gleanings better than his gatherings. The improving of a victory is often more honourable, and of greater consequence than the winning of it; in this they had signalized themselves, and their own courage and conduct, or rather, God had dignified them; for tho' to magnify their achievements, he is willing to diminish his own performances, yet he will not take any flowers from God's crown to adorn theirs with; *God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian*, and a great slaughter has been made of the enemy by your numerous hosts, and *what was I able*

to do with three hundred men, in comparison of you, and your brave exploits? Gideon stands here a very great example of self-denial, and the instance shews us, 1. That humility is the best way to put by envy. It is true, even right works are often envied, *Eccl. iv. 4*. Yet they are not so apt to be so, when those who do them appear not to be proud of them. They are malignant indeed, who seek to cast those down from their excellency that humble and abase themselves. 2. It is likewise the surest method of ending strife, for *only by pride comes contention*, Prov. xiii. 10. 3. Humility is most amiable and admirable, in the midst of great attainments and advancements: Gideon's conquests did greatly set off his condescensions. 4. It is the proper act of humility to esteem others better than our selves, and in honour to prefer one another.

Now what was the issue of this controversy? The Ephraimites had *chid with him sharply*, ver. 1. forgetting the respect owing to their general, and one whom God had honoured, and giving vent to their passion in a very indecent liberty of speech a certain sign of a weak and indefensible cause; reason runs low, when the chiding flies high. But Gideon's *soft answer turned away their wrath*, Prov. xv. 1. *Their anger was abated toward him*, ver. 3. It is intimated, that they retained some resentment, but he prudently overlooked it, and let it cool by degrees. Very great and good men must expect to have their patience tried, by the unkindnesses and follies, even of those that serve, and must not think it strange.

4. ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. 5. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me, for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. 6. ¶ And the princes of Succoth said, *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand*, that we should give bread unto thine army? 7. And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness, and with briers. 8. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him, as the men of Succoth had answered him. 9. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower. 10. ¶ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. 11. ¶ And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents, on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. 12. And when Zeba and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host. 13. ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, 14. And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him, and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men. 15. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold, Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me; saying, *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand*, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*? 16. And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. 17. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

In these verses we have,

1. Gideon, as a valiant general, pursuing the remaining Midianites, and bravely following his blow. A very great slaughter was made of the enemy at first, *one hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword*, ver. 10. Such a terrible execution did they make among themselves, and so easy a prey were they to Israel: but it seems the two kings of Midian, being better provided than the rest for an escape, with fifteen thousand men got over Jordan before the passes could be secured by the Ephraimites, and made towards their own country: Gideon thinks he doth not fully execute his commission to save Israel, if he let them escape. He is not content to chase them out of the country, but he will chase them out of the world, *Job xviii. 18*. This generous design is here pushed on with great resolution, and crowned with great success.

(1.) His resolution was very exemplary, and effected his purpose under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements that could

could be. (1.) He took none with him but his three hundred men, who now laid aside their trumpets and torches, and betook themselves to their swords and spears. God had said, by *these three hundred men will I save you*, chap. vii. 7. And confiding in that promise, Gideon kept to them only, *ver. 4.* He expected more from three hundred men, supported by a particular promise, than from so many thousands supported only by their own valour. (2.) They were faint, and yet pursuing much fatigued with what they had done, and yet eager to do more against the enemies of their country. Our spiritual warfare must thus be prosecuted with what strength we have, tho' we have but little; it is many a time the true Christian's case, fainting and yet pursuing. (3.) Tho' he met with discouragement from those of his own people, was jeered for what he was doing, as going about what he could never accomplish, yet he went on with it. If those that should be our helpers in the way of our duty, prove hindrances to us, let not that drive us off from it. Those know not how to value God's acceptance, that know not how to despise the reproaches and contempts of men. (4.) He made a very long march by *the way of them that dwelt in tents*, *ver. 11.* Either because he hoped to find them kinder to him than the men of Succoth and Penuel, that dwelt in walled towns (Sometimes there is more generosity and charity found in country-tents, than in city-palaces) Or, because that was a road in which he would be least expected, and therefore that way it would be the greater surprize to them. It is evident, he spared no pains to compleat his victory. Now he found it an advantage to have his three hundred men, such as could bear hunger, and thirst, and toil. It should seem he set upon them by night, as he had done before, for *the host was secure.* The security of sinners oft proves their ruin, and dangers are most fatal, when least feared. (2.) His success was very encouraging to resolution and industry in a good cause. He routed the army, *ver. 11.* and took the two kings prisoners, *ver. 12.* Note, The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him. They that think to run from the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, do but run upon it. If he flee from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through; for evil pursueth sinners.

2. Here is Gideon, as a righteous judge, chastising the insolence of the disaffected Israelites, the men of Succoth, and the men of Penuel, both in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan.

1. Their crime was great. Gideon with a handful of feeble folk, was pursuing the common enemy, to compleat the deliverance of Israel; his way leads him through the city of Succoth first, and afterwards of Penuel; he expects not that the magistrates should meet him in their formalities, congratulate his victory, present him with the keys of their city, give him a treat, much less that they should send forces in to his assistance, tho' he had reason to expect all this; but he only begs some necessary food for his soldiers, that were ready to faint for want, and he doth it very humbly and importunately, *Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me*, *ver. 5.* The request had been reasonable, if they had been but poor travellers in distress, but considering that they were soldiers, *called, and chosen, and faithful*, Rev. xvii. 4. Men whom God had greatly honoured, and whom Israel was highly obliged to, that had done great service to their country, and were now doing more, that they were conquerors, and had power to put them under contribution, that they were fighting God's battles and Israel's, nothing could be more just, than that they should furnish them with the best provisions their city afforded. But the princes of Succoth neither feared God, nor regarded man: For, 1. In contempt of God, they refused to answer the just demands of him whom God had raised up to save them, affronted him, bantered him, despised the success he had already been honoured with, despaired of the success of his present undertaking; did what they could to discourage him in prosecuting the war, and were very willing to believe that the remaining forces of Midian, which they had now seen march through their country would be too hard for him. *Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna now in thine hand?* No, nor never will be, so they conclude, judging by the disproportion of numbers. 2. The bowels of their compassion were shut up against their brethren, they were as destitute of love as they were of faith, would not give morsels of bread, (so some read it) to them that were ready to perish. Were these princes? were these Israelites? unworthy either title, base and degenerate men. Surely they were worshippers of Baal, or in the interests of Midian. The men of Penuel gave the same answer to the same request, defying *the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon*, *ver. 8.*

2. The warning he gave them of the punishment of their crime was very fair. (1.) He did not punish it immediately, because he would not lose so much time from the pursuit of the enemy that were flying from him, because he would not seem to do it in a heat of passion; and because he should do it more to their confusion, when he had compleated his undertaking, which they thought impracticable. But, (2.) He told them how he would punish it, *ver. 7, 9.* To shew the confidence he had of success in the strength of God, and that if they had the least grain of grace and consideration left, they might upon second thoughts repent of their folly, humble themselves, and contrive how to atone for it, by sending after him succours and supplies, which if they had done, no doubt, Gideon would have pardoned them. God

gives notice of danger, and space to repent, that sinners may flee from the wrath to come.

3. The warning being slighted, the punishment, tho' very severe, was really very just. (1.) The princes of Succoth were first made examples, Gideon got intelligence of their number, seventy-seven men, their names and places of abode, which were described in writing to him, *ver. 14.* And, to their great surprize, when they thought he had scarce overtaken the Midianites, he was returned a conqueror; his three hundred men were now the ministers of his justice, secured all these princes, brought them before Gideon, who shewed them his royal captives in chains, these are the men you thought me an unequal match for, and would give me no assistance in the pursuit of, *ver. 15.* And he punished them with thorns and briars, but it should seem, not unto death. With these, 1. He tormented their bodies, either by scourging, or rolling them in the thorns and briars, some way or other he *tore their flesh*, *ver. 7.* Those shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy. Perhaps he observed them to be soft and delicate men, who despised him and his company for their roughness and hardness, and therefore Gideon thus mortified them for their effeminacy. 2. He instructed their minds, with these *he taught the men of Succoth*, *ver. 16.* The correction he gave them was intended not for destruction, but wholesome discipline, to make them wiser and better for the future. *He made them know*, so the word is, made them know themselves and their folly, God and their duty, made them know who Gideon was, since they would not know by the success wherewith God had crowned him. Note, Many are taught with the briars and thorns of affliction, that would not learn otherwise. God gives wisdom by the rod, and reproof chastens and teaches, and by correction opens the ear to discipline. Our blessed Saviour, tho' he were a son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered, Heb. v. 8. Let every pricking briar, and grieving thorn, especially when it becomes a thorn in the flesh, be thus interpreted, thus improved, by this God designs to teach me, what good lesson shall I learn? (2.) Penuel's doom comes next, and it should seem he used them more severely than the other, for good reason, no doubt, *ver. 17.* (1.) He beat down their tower, of which they gloried, in which they trusted, and perhaps scornfully advised Gideon and his men rather to secure themselves in that, than to pursue the Midianites. What men make their pride, the ruin of it is justly made their shame. (2.) He slew the men of the city, not all, perhaps not the elders or princes, but those that had affronted him, and those only. He slew some of the men of the city that were most insolent and abusive, for terror to the rest, and so he taught the men of Penuel.

18 ¶ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they, each one resembled the children of a king. 19. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. 20. And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them: but the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels necks.

Judgment began at the house of God, in the just correction of the men of Succoth and Penuel, who were Israelites, but it did not end there. The kings of Midian, when they had served to demonstrate Gideon's victories, and grace his triumphs, must now be reckoned with.

1. They are indicted for the murder of Gideon's brethren, some time ago at mount Tabor. When the children of Israel, for fear of the Midianites, made them dens in the mountains, chap. vi. 2. those young men, it is likely, took shelter in that mountain, where they were found by these two kings, and most basely and barbarously slain in cold blood. When he asks them, *what manner of men they were?* *ver. 18.* it is not because he was uncertain of the thing, or wanted proof of it, he was not so little concerned for his brethren's blood, as not to enquire it out before now, nor were these proud tyrants solicitous to conceal it. But he puts that question to them, that by their acknowledgment of the more than ordinary comeliness of the persons they slew, their crime might appear the more heinous, and consequently their punishment the more righteous. They could not but own, that tho' they were found in a mean and abject condition, yet they had an unusual greatness and majesty in their countenances, not unlike Gideon himself at this time, they resembled the children of a king, born for something great.

2. Being found guilty of this murder by their own confession, Gideon, tho' he might have put them to death as Israel's judge, for the injuries done to that people in general, as Oreb and Zeeb, chap. vi. 25. yet he chooseth rather to put on the character of an avenger of blood, as next of kin to the persons slain. They were my brethren, *ver. 19.* Their other crimes might have been forgiven,

given, at least Gideon would not have slain them himself, let them have answered it to the people; but *the voice of his brethrens blood cries, cries to him*, now it is in the power of his hand to avenge it, and therefore there is no remedy, by him must *their blood be shed*, tho' they were kings. Little did they think to have heard of this so long after, but murder seldom goes unpunished in this life.

3. The execution is done by Gideon himself with his own hand, because he was the *avenger of blood*; he bid his son slay them, for he was a near relation to the persons murdered, and fittest to be his father's substitute and representative, and he would thus train him up to the acts of justice and boldness, *ver. 20.* But, (1.) The young man himself desired to be excused, he feared, tho' they were bound and could make no resistance, *because he was yet a youth*, and not used to such work, courage doth not always run in a blood. (2.) The prisoners themselves desired that Gideon would excuse it, *ver. 21.* begged, if they must die, they might die by his own hand, which would be somewhat more honourable to them, and more easy, for by his great strength, they would sooner be dispatched and rid out of their pain. *As is the man so is his strength.* Either they mean it of themselves, they were men of such strength as called for a better hand than that young man's to overpower quickly; or of Gideon, thou art at thy full strength, he is not yet come to it, therefore be thou the executioner. From those that are grown up to maturity, it is expected, that what they do in any service, be done with so much the more strength. Gideon dispatched them presently, and seized the *ornaments that were on their camels necks, ornaments like the moon*, so it is in the margin, either badges of their royalty, or perhaps of their idolatry, for Ashteroth was represented by the moon, as Baal by the sun. With these he took all their other ornaments, as appears, *ver. 26.* where we find he did not put them to so good a use as one would have wished. The destruction of these two kings, and that of the two princes, *chap. vii. 25.* is long after pleaded as a precedent in prayer for the ruin of other the church's enemies, *Psal. lxxxiii. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes as Zebah and Zalmunna*, let them all be cut off in like manner.

22. ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy sons son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. 23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you. 24. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey: (for they had golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25. And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein, every man the ear-rings of his prey. 26. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested, was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold, beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels necks. 27. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even in Ophrah*; and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. 28. ¶ Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more: and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

Here is, 1. Gideon's laudable modesty after his great victory, in refusing the government which the people offered him. (1.) It was honestly done of them to offer it, *ver. 22. Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us.* They thought it very reasonable, that he who had gone through the toils and perils of their deliverance, should enjoy the honour and power of commanding them ever after: and very desirable that he who in this great and critical juncture, had had such manifest tokens of God's presence with him, should ever after preside in their affairs. Let us apply it to the Lord Jesus, he hath delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, our spiritual enemies, the worst and most dangerous, and therefore it is fit he should rule over us; for how can we be better ruled than by one that appears to have so great an interest in heaven, and so great a kindness for this earth? We are delivered that we may *serve him without fear*, Luke i. 74, 75. (2.) It was honourably done of him to refuse it, *ver. 23. I will not rule over you.* What he did was with a design to serve them, not to rule them, to make them safe, easy, and happy, not to make himself great or honourable. And as he was not ambitious of grandeur himself, so he did not covet to entail it upon his family, *my son shall not rule over you*, either while I live, or when I am gone, but *the Lord shall still rule over you*, and constitute your judges by the special designation of his own Spirit, as he has done. This speaks, 1. His modesty, and the mean opinion he had of himself and his

own merits. He thought the honour of doing good was recompence enough for all his services, which needed not be rewarded with the honour of bearing sway, *he that is greatest, let him be your minister.* 2. His piety, and the great opinion he had of God's government. Perhaps he discerned in the people a dislike of the theocracy, or divine regimen, and a desire of a king like the nations, and thought his merits a colourable pretence to move for this change of government. But Gideon would by no means admit it. No good man can be pleased in any honour done to himself, which ought to be peculiar to God. *Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* 1 Cor. i. 13.

2. Gideon's irregular zeal to perpetuate the remembrance of this victory, by an ephod, made of the choicest of the spoils. 1. He asked the men of Israel to give him the ear-rings of their prey; for such ornaments they stripped the slain of in abundance. These he demanded, either because they were the finest gold, and therefore fittest for a religious use, or because they had had as ear-rings some superstitious signification, which he thought too well of. Aaron called for the ear-rings to make the golden calf of, *Exod. xxxii. 2.* These Gideon begged, *ver. 24.* And he had reason enough to think that they who offered him a crown, when he declined it, would not deny him their ear-rings, when he begged them, nor did they, *ver. 25.* 2. He himself added the spoil he took from the kings of Midian, which it should seem had fallen to his share, *ver. 26.* The generals had that part of the prey which was most splendid, the *prey of divers colours*, *chap. v. 30.* 3. Of this he made an ephod, *ver. 27.* It was plausible enough, and might be well intended to preserve a memorial of so divine a victory in the judge's own city. But it was a very unadvised thing to make that memorial to be an ephod, a sacred garment. I would gladly put the best construction that can be upon the actions of good men, and such a one we are sure Gideon was. But we have reason to suspect that this ephod had, as usual, a teraphim annexed to it, *Hof. iii. 4.* And that he having an altar already, built by divine appointment, *chap. vi. 26.* which he erroneously imagined he might still use for sacrifice, he intended this for an oracle, to be consulted in doubtful cases. So the learned Dr Spencer supposes. Each tribe having now very much its government within it self, they were too apt to covet their religion among themselves. We read very little of Shiloh and the ark there, in all the story of the judges. Sometimes by divine dispensation, and much oftner by the transgression of men, that law which obliged them to worship only at that one altar, seems not to have been so religiously observed as one would have expected, no more than afterwards, when in the reigns, even of very good kings, *the high places were not taken away*; from which we may infer, that that law had a further reach as a type of Christ, by whose mediation alone all our services are accepted. Gideon therefore, through ignorance or inconsideration, sinned in making this ephod, tho' he had a good intention in it. Shiloh, it is true, was not far off, but it was in Ephraim, and that tribe had lately disobliged him, *ver. 1.* Which made him perhaps not care to go so often among them, as his occasions would lead him, to consult the oracle, and therefore he would have one nearer home. However this might be honestly intended, and at first did little hurt, yet in process of time, (1.) *Israel went a whoring after it*, i. e. they deserted God's altar and priesthood, being fond of change, and prone to idolatry, and having some pretence to pay respect to this ephod, because so good a man as Gideon had set it up, and by degrees their respects to it grew more and more superstitious. Note, Many are led into false ways, by one false step of a good man. The beginning of sin, particularly of idolatry and will-worship, is *as the letting forth of water*, so it has been found in the fatal corruptions of the church of Rome, therefore *leave it off before it be meddled with.* (2.) It became a snare to Gideon himself, abating his zeal for the house of God in his old age, and much more to his house, who were drawn by it into sin, and it proved the ruin of the family.

3. Gideon's happy agency for the repose of Israel, *ver. 28.* The Midianites that had been so vexatious, gave them no more disturbance; Gideon, tho' he would not assume the honour and power of a king, governed as a judge, and did all the good offices he could for his people; so that *the country was in quietness forty years.* Hitherto the times of Israel had been reckoned by forties. Othniel judged forty years, Ehud eighty, just two forties; Barak forty, and now Gideon forty. Providence so ordering it to bring in mind the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness, *forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* And see *Ezek. iv. 6.* After these Eli ruled forty years, 1 *Sam. iv. 18.* Samuel and Saul forty, *Acts xiii. 21.* David forty, and Solomon forty. Forty years is about an age.

29. ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30. And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. 31. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32. ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of

of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites. 33. And it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. 34. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side: 35. Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

We have here the conclusion of the story of Gideon.

1. He lived privately, *ver. 29.* he was not puffed up with his great honours, did not covet a palace or castle to dwell in, but retired to the house he had lived in before his elevation. Thus that brave Roman who was called from the plough upon a sudden occasion to command the army, when the action was over, returned to his plough again.

2. His family was multiplied. He had many wives, therein he he transgressed the law, by them he had seventy sons, *ver. 30.* but one by a concubine, whom he named Abimelech, which signifies, my father, a king; that proved the ruin of his family, *ver. 31.*

3. He died in honour, in a good old age, when he had lived as long as he was capable of serving God and his country, and who would desire to live any longer? And he was *buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.*

4. After his death the people corrupted themselves, and went all to naught. As soon as ever Gideon was dead, who had kept them close to the worship of the God of Israel, they found themselves under no restraint, and then they *went a whoring after Baalim*, *ver. 33.* They went a whoring first after another ephod, *ver. 27.* which Gideon had himself given them too much the occasion of, and now they went a whoring after another god. False worships made way for false deities. They now chose a new god (*chap. v. 8.*) a god of a new name, Baal-berith; a goodefs, say some. Berith, some think, was Berytus, the place where the Phœnicians worshipped this idol. *The Lord of a covenant*, so it signifies, perhaps because his worshippers joined themselves by covenant to him, in imitation of Israel's covenanting with God, for the Devil is God's ape. In this revolt of Israel to idolatry, they shewed, 1. Great ingratitude to God, *ver. 34.* *They remembered not the Lord*, not only who had delivered them into the hands of their enemies, to punish them for their idolatry, but who had also delivered them out of the hand of their enemies, to invite them back again into his service: both the judgments and the mercies were forgotten, and the impressions of them lost. 2. Great ingratitude to Gideon, *ver. 35.* A great deal of goodness he had shewed unto Israel, as a father to his country, for which they ought to have been kind to his family when he was gone, for that is one way by which we ought to shew our selves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and may be returning their kindnesses when they are in their graves. But Israel shewed not this kindness to Gideon's family, as we shall find in the next chapter. Those who forgot their God, no wonder if they forgot their friends.

C H A P. IX.

The apostasy of Israel, after the death of Gideon, is punished, not as the former apostasies, by a foreign invasion, or the oppressions of any neighbouring power, but by intestine broils among themselves, which in this chapter we have the story of, and it is hard to say, whether their sin, or their misery appears most in it. It is an account of the usurpation and tyranny of Abimelech, who was base son to Gideon; so we must call him, and not more modestly, his natural son, he was so unlike him. We are here told, 1. How he thrust himself into the government at Shechem, his own city, by subtilty and cruelty, particularly by the murder of all his brethren, ver. 1—6. 2. How his doom was read in a parable by Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, ver. 7—21. 3. What strifes there were between Abimelech and his friends the Shechemites, ver. 22—41. 4. How this ended in the ruin of the Shechemites, ver. 42—49. And of Abimelech himself, ver. 50—57. Of this meteor, this ignis fatuus of a prince, that was not a protector, but plague to his country, we may say, as once was said of a great tyrant, that he came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, and died like a dog. For the transgression of a land, such are the princes thereof.

1. **A**ND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, unto his mothers brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mothers father, saying, 2. Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal (*which are threescore and ten persons*) reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. 3. And his mothers brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem

all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. 4. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver, out of the house of Baal-berith: wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons which followed him. 5. And he went unto his fathers house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being threescore and ten persons*, upon one stone: notwithstanding, yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. 6. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

We are here told by what arts Abimelech got into the saddle, and made himself great. His mother perhaps had instilled into his mind some towering ambitious thoughts, and the name his father gave him carrying royalty in it, might help to blow up these sparks, and now he has buried his father, nothing will serve his proud spirit but he will succeed him in the government of Israel, directly contrary to his father's will, for he had declared *no son of his should rule over them.* He had no call from God to this honour as his father had, nor was there any present occasion for a judge to deliver Israel, as there was when his father was advanced, but his own ambition must be gratified, and that is all he aims at. Now observe here,

1. How craftily he got his mother's relations into his interests. Shechem was a city in the tribe of Ephraim of great note, Joshua had held his last parliament there; if that city would but appear for him, and set him up, he thought it would go far in his favour. There he had an interest in the family of which his mother was, and by them he made an interest in the leading men of the city. It doth not appear that any of them had an eye to him as a man of merit, that had any thing to recommend him to such a choice, but the motion came first from himself. None would have dreamed of making such a fellow as he king, if he had not dreamed of it himself. And see here, (1.) How he wheedled them into the choice, *ver. 2, 3.* He basely suggested that Gideon having left seventy sons that made a good figure, and had a good interest, they were designing to keep the power which their father had in their hands, and by a joint-influence to reign over Israel, now (saith he) you had better have one king than more, than many, than so many: Affairs of state are best managed by a single person, *ver. 2.* We have no reason to think that any, or all of Gideon's sons had the least intention to reign over Israel, they were of their father's mind, that *the Lord should reign over them*, and they were not called of him; yet this he insinuates to pave the way to his own pretensions. Note, Those who design ill themselves, are commonly most apt to suspect that others design ill. As for himself, he only puts them in mind of his relation to them, *verbum sapienti, remember that I am your bone and your flesh.* The plot took wonderfully: The magistrates of Shechem were pleased to think of their city being a royal city, and the metropolis of Israel, and therefore they inclined to follow him, for they said, *he is our brother*, and his advancement will be our advantage. (2.) How he got money from them to bear the charges of his pretensions, *ver. 4.* They gave him seventy pieces of silver, it is not said what the value of these pieces was; so many shekels was less, and so many talents more, than we can well imagine, therefore it is supposed they were each a pound weight: but they gave it out of the house of Baal-berith, i. e. out of the publick treasury, which out of respect to their idol, they deposited in his temple to be protected by him; or out of the offerings that had been made to that idol, which they hoped would prosper the better in his hands for its having been consecrated to their God. How unfit was he to reign over Israel, because unlikely to defend them, who instead of restraining and punishing idolatry thus early, made himself a pensioner to an idol? (3.) What soldiers he lifted; he hired into his service vain and light persons, the scum and scoundrels of the country, men of broken fortunes, giddy-heads, and profligate lives; none but such would own him, and they were fittest to serve his purpose. Like leader, like followers.

2. How cruelly he got his father's sons out of the way. The first thing he did with the rabble he headed, was to kill all his brethren at once, publickly, and in cold blood, threescore and ten men, one only escaping, all slain upon one stone. See in this bloody tragedy, (1.) The power of ambition, what beasts it will turn men into, how it will break through all the ties of natural affection, and natural conscience, and sacrifice that which is most sacred, dear and valuable to its designs. Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of a man to be so very barbarous! (2.) The peril of honour, and high birth. Their being the sons of so great a man as Gideon, exposed them thus, and made Abimelech jealous of them. We find just the same number of Ahab's sons slain together at Samaria, 2 Kings x. r. The Grand Seigniors have seldom thought themselves safe while any of their brethren have been unstrangled. Let none then envy those of high extraction, or complain of their own meanness and obscurity, the lower the safer.

Way being thus made for Abimelech's election, the men of Shechem proceeded to choose him king, *ver. 6.* God was not consulted whether they should have any king at all, much less who it should be; here is no advising with the priest, or with their brethren of any other city or tribe, tho' it was designed he should reign over Israel, *ver. 22.* But, 1. The Shechemites, as if they were the people, and wisdom must die with them, do all, they aided and abetted him in the murder of his brethren, *ver. 24.* and then they *made him king.* The men of Shechem, that is the great men, the chief magistrates of the city, and the house of Millo, *i. e.* the common council, the *full house*, or *house of fullness*, as the word signifies, those that met in their Guild-hall, (we read often of the house of Millo, or state-house in Jerusalem, or the city of David, *2 Sam. v. 9. 2 Kings xii. 20.*) These gathered together, not to prosecute and punish Abimelech for this barbarous murder, as they ought to have done; he being one of their citizens, but to *make him king.* *Pretium sceleris tulit hic diadema.* What could they promise themselves from a king that laid the foundations of his kingdom in blood? 2. The rest of the Israelites were so very sottish as to sit by unconcerned; they took no care to give check to this usurpation, to protect the sons of Gideon, or to avenge their death, but tamely submitted to the bloody tyrant, as men, that, with their religion, had lost their reason, and all sense of honour and liberty, justice and gratitude. How vigorously had their fathers appeared to avenge the death of the Levite's concubine, and yet so wretchedly degenerate are they now, as not to attempt the revenging of the death of Gideon's sons, it is for this that they are charged with ingratitude, *chap. viii. 35.* *Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.*

7. ¶ And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lift up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, you men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. 9. But the olive-tree said unto them, should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 10. And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. 11. But the fig-tree said unto them, should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. 12. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. 15. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 16. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands: 17. (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life for you, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18. And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother.) 19. If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal, and with his house this day, then rejoyce ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoyce in you: 20. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo: and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

We have here the only testimony that appears to have been born against the wicked confederacy of Abimelech, and the men of Shechem. It was a sign they had provoked God to depart from them, that neither any prophet was sent, nor any remarkable judgment to awaken this stupid people, and to stop the progress of this threatening mischief. Only Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, who by a special providence escaped the common ruin of his family, *ver. 5.* dealt plainly with the Shechemites, and his speech which is here recorded, shews him to be a man of such great ingenuity and wisdom, and really such an accomplished gentleman, that we cannot but the more lament the fall of Gideon's sons. Jotham did not go about to raise an army out of the other cities of Israel, in which, one would think he might have

made a good interest for his father's sake, to avenge his brethren's death, much less to set up himself in competition with Abimelech, so groundless was the usurper's suggestion, that the sons of Gideon aimed at dominion, *ver. 2.* but he contents himself with giving a faithful reproof to the Shechemites, and fair warning of the fatal consequences. He got an opportunity of speaking to them from the top of mount Gerizim, the mount of blessings, at the foot of which, probably the Shechemites were upon some occasion or other gathered together, Josephus saith, solemnizing a festival, and it seems they were willing to hear what he had to say.

1. His preface is very serious, *ver. 7.* *Hearken unto me ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.* As ever you hope to obtain God's favour, and to be accepted of him, give me a patient and impartial hearing. Note, Those that expect to have God hear their prayers, must be willing to hear reason, to hear a faithful reproof, and to hear the complaints and appeals of wronged innocency. If we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayer will be an abomination, *Prov. xxviii. 9.*

2. His parable is very ingenious, that when the trees were disposed to choose a king, the government was offered to those valuable noble trees, the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, but they refused it, choosing rather to serve than rule, to do good, than to bear sway. But the same tender being made to the bramble, he accepted it, and talked big upon it. It was an ancient way of instruction, this by parables, and very useful, especially to give reproofs by.

(1.) He hereby applauds the generous modesty of Gideon, and the other judges who were before him, and perhaps of the sons of Gideon, who had declined accepting the state and power of kings when they might have had it. And likewise shews, that it is in general the temper of all wise and good men to decline preferment, and to choose rather to be useful than to be great.

1. There was no occasion at all for the trees to choose a king, they are all the *trees of the Lord which he has planted*, *Psal. civ. 16.* and which therefore he will protect: Nor was there any occasion for Israel to talk of setting a king over them, for *the Lord was their king.*

2. When they had it in their thoughts to choose a king, they did not offer the government to the stately cedar, or the lofty pine, which are only for shew and shade, and not otherwise useful till they are cut down, but to the fruit-trees, the vine and the olive. Those that bear fruit for the publick good, are justly respected and honoured by all that are wise, more than they that affect to make a figure. For a good useful man some would even dare to die.

3. The reason which all these fruit-trees gave for their refusal was much the same. The olive pleads, *ver. 9.* *Should I leave my fatness;* and the vine, *ver. 13.* *Should I leave my wine,* wherewith both God and man are served and honoured, for oil and wine were used both at God's altars, and at mens tables; and *shall I leave my sweetness, saith the fig-tree, and my good fruit,* *ver. 11.* and go to be promoted over the trees, or, as the margin reads it, *go up and down for the trees.* It is intimated, 1. That government involves a man in a great deal, both of toil and care; he that is promoted over the trees must go up and down for them, and make himself a perfect drudge to business. 2. That those who are preferred to places of publick trust and power, must resolve to forego all their private interests and advantages, and sacrifice them to the good of the community. The fig-tree must love its sweetness, its sweet retirement, sweet repose, and sweet conversation and contemplation, if it go to be promoted over the trees, and must undergo a constant fatigue. 3. That those who are advanced to honour and dignity, are in great danger of losing their fatness and fruitfulness. Preferment is apt to make men proud and slothful, and that spoils their usefulness, wherewith in a lower sphere they honoured God and man. For which reason, they that desire to do good, are afraid of being too great.

(2.) He hereby exposes the ridiculous ambition of Abimelech, whom he compares to the bramble or thistle, *ver. 14.* He supposeth the trees to make their court to him, *Come thou and reign over us,* perhaps, because he knew not that the first motion of Gideon's preferment came from himself, as we found, *ver. 2.* but thought the Shechemites had proposed it to him; however, supposing it so, his folly in accepting it deserved to be chastised. The bramble, a worthless plant, not to be numbred among the trees, useless and fruitless, nay, hurtful and vexatious; scratching and tearing, and doing mischief, it began with the curse, and its end is to be burned: Such a one was Abimelech, and yet chosen to the government *by the trees, by all the trees,* this election seems to have been more unanimous than any of the other. Let us not think it strange, if we see *folly set in a great dignity*, *Eccl. x. 6.* and the *vilest men exalted*, *Psal. xii. 8.* and men blind to their own interest in the choice of their guides. The bramble being chosen to the government, he takes no time to consider whether he should accept it or no, but presently, as if he had been born and bred to dominion, hectors, and assures them they should find him as he found them. See what *great swelling words of vanity* he speaks, *ver. 15.* what promises he makes to his faithful subjects, *let them come and trust in his shadow:* A goodly shadow to trust in! how unlike to *the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,* which

which a good magistrate is compared to, *Isa. xxxii. 2.* Come, trust in his shadow ! more likely to be scratched if they came near him. Thus men *boast of a false gift.* Yet he threatens with as much confidence as he promiseth ; if ye be not faithful, *let fire come out of the bramble,* a very unlikely thing to spit fire, and devour the cedars of Lebanon, more likely to catch fire, and be it self devoured.

3. His application is very close and plain. In it, (1.) He minds them of the many good services his father had done for them, *ver. 17.* He fought their battles, in peril of his own life, and to their unspeakable advantage. It was a shame they needed to be put in mind of this. (2.) He aggravates their unkindness to his father's family, they had not *done to him according to the deserving of his hands,* *ver. 16.* Great merits oft meet with very ill returns, especially to posterity, when the benefactor is forgotten, as Joseph was among the Egyptians. Gideon had left many sons that were an honour to his name and family, and those they had barbarously murdered ; one son he had left that was the blemish of his name and family, for he was *the son of his maid-servant,* whom all that had any respect to Gideon's honour, would endeavour to conceal, yet him they made their king. In both they put the utmost contempt imaginable upon Gideon. (3.) He leaves it to the event to determine whether they had done well, whereby he lodges the appeal with the divine providence : (1.) If they prospered long in this villany, he would give them leave to say they had done well, *ver. 19.* If your carriage towards the house of Gideon be such as can be justified at any bar of justice, honour, or conscience, much good may it do with your new king. But, (2.) If they had, as he was sure they had, dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, let them never expect to prosper, *ver. 20.* Abimelech, and the Shechemites that had strengthened one another's hands in this villany, would certainly be a plague and ruin one to another. Let none expect to do ill and fare well.

Jotham having given them this admonition, made a shift to escape with his life, *ver. 21.* either they could not reach him, or they were so far convinced, that they would not add the guilt of his blood to all the rest ; but for fear of Abimelech he lived in exile, in some remote obscure place. Those whose extraction and education is never so high, know not to what difficulties and straits they may be reduced.

22. ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, 23. Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem : and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech : 24. That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brethren. 25. And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them : and it was told Abimelech. 26. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem : and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes,* and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. 28. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him ? is not *he* the son of Jerubbaal, and Zebul his officer ? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem : for why should we serve him ? 29. And would to God this people were under my hand ; then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out. 30. ¶ And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed, and his brethren be come to Shechem ; and behold, they fortifie the city against thee. 32. Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field. 33. And it shall be, *that* in the morning as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city : and behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion. 34. ¶ And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. 35. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him from lying in wait. 36. And when Gaal saw the people,

he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains, as if *they were* men. 37. And Gaal spake again, and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim. 38. Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst ; Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him ? is not this the people that thou hast despised ? go out, I pray now, and fight with them. 39. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown, and wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate. 41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah : and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem. 42. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. 43. And he took the people, and divided, them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city, and he rose up against them and smote them. 44. And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the* people that *were* in the fields, and slew them. 45. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt. 46. ¶ And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith. 47. And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48. And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all that people that *were* with him ; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done. 49. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them : so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

Three years Abimelech reigned after a sort, without any disturbance ; it is not said he judged Israel, or did any service at all to his country, but so long he enjoyed the title and dignity of a king, and not only the Shechemites, but many other places paid him respect. They were fond of a king, that could please themselves with such a one as this.

But the triumphing of the wicked is short. *Within three years, as the years of a hireling, all this glory shall be contemned,* and laid in the dust, *Isa. xvi. 14.* The ruin of these confederates in wickedness was from the righteous hand of the God to whom vengeance belongs. *He sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites,* *ver. 22. i. e.* They grew jealous one of another, and ill-affected one to another. He slighted them that set him up, and countenanced other cities, perhaps more than theirs, which now began to come into his interests ; and then they grew uneasy at his government, blamed his conduct, and quarrelled at his impositions. This was from God. He permitted the Devil, that great mischief-maker to sow discord between them, and he is an *evil spirit*, whom God not only keeps under his check, but sometimes serves his own purposes by. Their own lusts were evil spirits, they are devils in mens own hearts, from them come wars and fightings. These God gave them up to, and so might be said to *send the evil spirit between them.* When mens sin is made their punishment, tho' God is not the author of the sin, yet the punishment is from him. The quarrel God had with Abimelech and the Shechemites, was for the murder of the sons of Gideon, *ver. 24.* *That the cruelty done to them might come, and their blood to be laid as a burthen upon Abimelech that slew him ; and the men of Shechem that helped him.* Note, 1. Sooner or later God will make inquisition for blood, innocent blood, and will return it on the heads of those that shed it, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. 2. Accessories shall be reckoned with as well as principals, in that and other sins. The Shechemites that countenanced Abimelech's pretensions, aided and abetted him in his bloody projects, and avowed the fact by making him king after he had done it, must fall with him, fall by him, and fall first. 3. Those that combine together to do wickedly, are justly dashed in pieces one against another. Blood cannot be a lasting cement to any interest.

1. The Shechemites began to affront Abimelech, perhaps they scarce knew why, or wherefore, but they were given to change. (1.) They dealt treacherously with him, ver. 23. It is not said, they repented of their sin in owning him, had they done so, it had been laudable to disown him, but they did it only upon some particular pique, conceived against him by their pride or envy. They that set him up were the first that deserted him, and endeavoured to kick him off. It is not strange that those who were ungrateful to Gideon were unfaithful to Abimelech, for what will hold those that will not be held by the obligation of such merits as Gideon's were? Note, It is just with God, that those who tempt others to be once perfidious, should afterwards be themselves betrayed by those whom they have taught to be perfidious. (2.) They aimed to seize him when he was at Arumah, (ver. 41.) his country-seat, expecting him to come to town, they set liers in wait for him, ver. 25. who should make him their prisoner, whom they had lately made their prince. Those who were thus posted, he not coming, took the opportunity of robbing travellers, which would help to make the people more and more uneasy under Abimelech, when they saw he could not, or would not, protect them from highway-men. (3.) They entertained one Gaal, and set him up as their head in opposition to Abimelech, ver. 26. This Gaal is said to be the son of Ebed, which signifies a servant, perhaps speaking the meanness of his extraction, as Abimelech was by the mother's side, so he by the father's, the son of a servant; here was one bramble contesting with another. We have reason to suspect that this Gaal was a native Canaanite, because he courts the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was the ancient lord of this city in Jacob's time. He was a bold ambitious man, served their purpose admirably well, when they were disposed to quarrel with Abimelech, and they also served his purpose, so he went over to them to blow the coals, and they put their confidence in him. (4.) They did all the despite they could to Abimelech's name, ver. 27. They made themselves very merry in his absence, as those that were glad he was out of the way, and that now they had another to head them, were in hopes to get clear of him: nay, they went into the house of their god, to solemnize their feast of in-gathering, and there they did eat, and drink, and cursed Abimelech, not only said all the ill they could of him in their table-talk, and the song of their drunkards, but wished all the ill they could to him over their sacrifices, praying to their idol to destroy him. They drank healths to his confusion, and with as loud huzzas as ever they had drank them to his prosperity. That very temple, whence they had fetched money to set him up with, did they now meet in to curse him, and contrive his ruin? Had they deserted their idol-god with their image-king, they might have hoped to prosper, but while they still cleave to the former, the latter shall cleave to them to their ruin? How should Satan cast out Satan! (5.) They pleased themselves with Gaal's defying of Abimelech, ver. 28, 29. They loved to hear that impudent upstart speak scornfully, (1.) Of Abimelech, tho' calling him in disdain Shechem, or a Shechemite, he reflected upon their own city. (2.) Of his good father likewise, Gideon, is not he the son of Jurubbaal? So he calls him, perhaps in an impious indignation at his name and memory, for throwing down the altar of Baal, turning that to his reproach which was his praise. (3.) Of his prime minister of state, Zebul his officer and ruler of the city. We may well be ashamed to serve them, and need not be afraid to oppose them. Men of turbulent ambitious spirits, thus despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Gaal aimed not to recover Shechem's liberty, only to change their tyrant, O that this people were under my hand, what I would do, I would challenge Abimelech to try titles for the crown; and it should seem he desired his friends to send him word that he was ready to dispute it with him, whenever he pleased, increase thine army, and come out. Do thy worst, let the point be determined by the sword. This pleased the Shechemites, who were now as sick of Abimelech as ever they had been fond of him. Men of no conscience will be men of no constancy.

2. Abimelech turned all his force upon them, and in a little time quite ruined them. Observe the steps of it.

1. The Shechemites counsels were betrayed to Abimelech by Zebul his confidant, the ruler of the city, who continued hearty for him. His anger was kindled, ver. 30. and the more because Gaal had spoken slightly of him, ver. 28. for perhaps if he had complemented and caressed him now things were in this ferment, he might have gained him to his interest; but he being obliged, sends notice to Abimelech of all that was said and done in Shechem against him, ver. 31. Betrayers are oft betrayed by some among themselves, and the cursing of the king is sometimes strangely carried by a bird of the air. He prudently adviseth him to come against the city immediately, and lose no time, ver. 32, 33. He thinks it best that he should march his forces by night into the neighbourhood, surprize the city in the morning, and then make the best of his advantages. How could the Shechemites hope to speed in their attempt, when the ruler of their city was in the interests of their enemy? They knew it, and yet took no care to secure him.

2. Gaal, that headed their faction, having been betrayed by Zebul, Abimelech's confidant, was most wretchedly bantered by him; Abimelech, according to Zebul's advice, drew all his forces

down upon Shechem by night, ver. 34. Gaal in the morning went out to the gate, ver. 35. to see what posture things were in, and to enquire what news; Zebul, as a ruler of the city, met him there as a friend, Abimelech and his forces being to move towards the city, Gaal discovers them, ver. 36. takes notice of their approach to Zebul, that was standing with him, little thinking that he had sent for them, and was now expecting them. Look you, saith he, do not I see a body of men coming down from the mountain towards us, yonder they are, pointing to the place; no, no, saith Zebul, thy eye-sight deceives thee, it is but the shadow of the mountains which thou takest to be an army. By this he intended, (1.) To ridicule him, as a man of no sense nor spirit, and therefore very unfit for what he pretended to; as a man that might easily be imposed upon, and made to believe any thing, and that was so silly, and so cowardly, that he apprehended danger where there was none, and was ready to fight with a shadow. (2.) To detain him, and hold him in talk, while the forces of Abimelech were coming up, that thereby they might gain advantage. But when Gaal being content to believe those he now saw to be but the shadow of the mountains (perhaps the mountains of Ebal and Gerizzim, which lay close by the city) was undeceived by the discovery of two other companies that marched apace towards the city, then Zebul took another way to banter him, upbraiding him with what he had said but a day or two before, in contempt of Abimelech, ver. 38. Where is now thy mouth, that foul mouth of thine, wherewith thou saidst, who is Abimelech? Note, Proud and haughty people are often made in a little time to change their note, and to dread those whom they most despised. Gaal had in a bravado challenged Abimelech to increase his army and come out, but now Zebul, in Abimelech's name, challenges him. Go out and fight with them, if thou darest. Justly are the insolent thus insulted over.

3. Abimelech routed Gaal's forces that sallied out of the town, ver. 39, 40. Gaal disheartened, no doubt by Zebul's hectoring him, and perceiving his interest weaker than he thought it was, tho' he marched out against Abimelech with what little force he had, was soon put to the worst, and obliged to retire into the city with great precipitation. In this action the Shechemites loss was inconsiderable, many were overthrown and wounded; the common effect of popular tumults, in which the inconsiderate multitude are often drawn into fatal snares by those that promise them mighty success.

4. Zebul that night expelled Gaal, and the party he had brought with him into Shechem out of the city, ver. 14. sending him to the place from whence he came. For tho' the generality of the city continued still averse to Abimelech, as appears by the sequel of the story, yet they were willing to part with Gaal, and did not oppose his expulsion, because tho' he had talked big, both his conduct and courage had failed him when there was occasion for them. Most people judge of mens fitness for business by their success, and he that doth not speed well, is concluded not to do well. Well, Gaal's interest in Shechem is soon at an end, and he that had talked of removing Abimelech, is himself removed; nor do we ever hear of him any more. Exit Gaal.

5. Abimelech the next day set upon the city, and quite destroyed it for their treacherous dealings with him. Perhaps, Abimelech had notice of their expelling Gaal, who had headed the faction, with which they thought he would have been satisfied, but the crime was too deep to be thus atoned for, and his resentments to keen to be pacified by so small an instance of submission, besides that it was more Zebul's act than theirs; by it their hands were weakened, and therefore he resolved to follow his blow, and effectually to chastise their treachery. 1. He had intelligence brought him that the people of Shechem were come out into the field, ver. 42. Some think, into the field of business to plough and sow, having lately gathered in their harvest, or to perfect their harvest, for it was only their vintage that they had made an end of, ver. 27. And then it intimates, that they were secure, and because Abimelech was retired, ver. 41. they thought themselves in no danger from him, and then the issue of it is an instance of sudden destruction coming upon those that cry peace and safety. Others think they went out into the field of battle, tho' Gaal was driven out they would not lay down their arms, but put themselves in a posture for another engagement with Abimelech, in which they hoped to retrieve what they had lost the day before. 2. He himself with a strong detachment cut off the communication between them and the city, stood in the entering of the gate, ver. 44. that they might neither make their retreat into the city, nor receive any succours from the city, and then sent two companies of his men, who were quite too strong for them, and they put them all to the sword, ran upon them that were in the fields and slew them. When we go out about our business, we are not sure that we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field. 3. He then fell upon the city itself, and with a rage, reaching up to heaven, tho' it was the place of his nativity, laid it in ruins, slew all the people, beat down all the buildings, and in token of his desire, that it might be a perpetual desolation, sowed it with salt, that it might remain a lasting monument of the punishment of perfidiousness. Yet Abimelech prevailed not to make its desolations perpetual, for it was afterwards rebuilt, and became so considerable a place, that all Israel came thither

thither to make Rehoboam king, 1 Kings xii. 1. And the place proved an ill omen. Abimelech intended hereby to punish the Shechemites for their flighting him now; but God intended to punish them for their serving him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. Thus when God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing, and they another, Isa. x. 6, 7. They design to maintain their honour, but God his.

6. Those that retired into a strong hold of their idol temple were all destroyed there. These are called the men of the tower of Shechem, ver. 46, 47. Some castle that belonged to the city, but lay at some distance from it; they hearing of the destruction of the city, withdrew into a hold of the temple, trusting, it is likely, not so much to its strength as to its sanctity; they put themselves under the protection of their idol, for thus *all people will walk in the name of their god*, and shall not we then choose to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, for *in the time of trouble he shall hide us in his pavilion*, Psal. xxvii. 5. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, Prov. xviii. 10. But that which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved to them a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find that run to idols for shelter, it will prove a refuge of lies. When Abimelech had them altogether penned up in that hold, he desired no more. That barbarous project presently came into his head, of setting fire to the strong-hold, and burning all the birds together in the nest. He kept the design to himself, but fees all his men on work to expedite the execution of it, ver. 48, 49. He ordered them all to follow him, and do as he did: as his father had said to his men, chap. vii. *look on me, and do likewise*; so faith he to his, as becomes a general that will not be wanting to give both the plainest direction, and the highest encouragement that can be to his soldiers, *what ye have seen me do, make haste to do as I have done*. Not *ite illuc*, but *venite huc*. The officers in Christ's army should thus teach by their example, Phil. iv. 9. He and they fetched each of them a bough from a wood, not far off, laid all their boughs together under the wall of this tower, which it is likely was of wood, set fire to their boughs, and so burnt down their hold, and all that were in it, who were either burnt or stifled with the smoke. What inventions men have to destroy one another! whence come these cruel wars and fightings but from their lusts? Some think the men of the tower of Shechem were the same with the house of Millo, and then Jotham's just imprecation was answered in the letter, *let fire come out from Abimelech*, and devour not only in general the men of Shechem, but in particular the house of Millo, ver. 20. About one thousand men and women perished in these flames, many of whom, it is probable, were no way concerned in the quarrel between Abimelech and the Shechemites, nor meddled with either side, yet in this civil war came to this miserable end; for men of factious turbulent spirits, *perish not alone in their iniquity*, but involve many more that follow them in their simplicity, in the same calamity with them.

50. ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelechs head, and all to break his scull. 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. 56. ¶ Thus God rendred the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. 57. And all the evil of the men of Shechem, did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

We have seen the ruin of the Shechemites compleated by the hand of Abimelech, and now it comes to his turn to be reckoned with, who was their leader in villainy. Thebez was a small city, it is likely, not far from Shechem, dependent upon it, and in confederacy with it. Now,

1. Abimelech attempted the destruction of this city, ver. 50. drove all the inhabitants of the town into the castle, or citadel, ver. 51. When he had them there, he did not doubt but to do the same execution here that he had lately done at the strong-hold of the temple of Baal-berith, not considering that the tower of an idol-temple lay more exposed to divine vengeance than any other tower. He attempted to set fire to this tower, at least to burn down the door, and so force an entrance, ver. 2. Those who have escaped and succeeded well in one desperate attempt, are apt to think the like attempt another time not desperate. This

instance was long after quoted, to shew how dangerous it is to come near the wall of a besieged city, 2 Sam. xi. 20, 22. But God infatuates those whom he will ruin.

2. In the attempt he was himself destroyed, having his brains knocked out with a piece of millstone, ver. 57. *No doubt this man was a murderer, whom tho' he had escaped the dangers of the war with Shechem, yet vengeance suffered not to live*, Acts xxviii. 4. *Evil pursues sinners*, and sometimes overtakes them then, when they are not only secure but triumphant. Thebez, we may suppose, was a weak inconsiderable place, conquered with Shechem, Abimelech having conquered the greater, makes no doubt of being master of the less without any difficulty, especially when he had taken the city, and had only the tower to deal with, yet he lays his bones with that, and there is all his honour buried. Thus are the *mighty things of the world* oft confounded by the weakest, and those things that are made light of. See here what rebukes those are justly put under many times by the divine providence, that are unreasonable in their demands of satisfaction for injuries received: Abimelech had some reason to chastise the Shechemites, and he had done it with a witness, but when he will carry his revenges further, and nothing will serve, but that Thebez also must be sacrificed to his rage, he is not only disappointed there, but destroyed, for verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Three circumstances are observable in the death of Abimelech, (1.) That he was slain with a stone, as he had slain his brethren, *all upon one stone*. (2.) That he had his skull broke, vengeance aimed at that guilty head which had worn the usurped crown. (3.) That the stone was cast upon him by a woman, ver. 53. He saw the stone come, it was therefore strange he did not avoid it, but, no doubt, made it so much the greater mortification to him, to see from what hand it came. Sisera died by a woman's hand, and knew it not, but Abimelech knew it; and when he found himself ready to breathe his last, nothing troubled him so much as this, that it should be said a woman slew him. See, (1.) His foolish pride, in laying so much to heart this little circumstance of his disgrace. Here was no care taken about his precious soul, no concern what would become of that, no prayer to God for his mercy, but very solicitous he is to patch up his shattered credit, when there is no patching his shattered skull. O, let it never be said that such a mighty man as Abimelech was killed by a woman. The man was dying, but his pride was alive and strong, and the same vain-glorious humour that had governed him all along, appears now at last. *Qualis vita, finis ita*. As God punished his cruelty by the manner of his death, so he punished his pride by the instrument of it. (2.) His foolish project to avoid this disgrace, nothing could be more ridiculous: his own servant must run him through, not to rid him the sooner out of his pain, but *that men say not a woman slew him*. Could he think that this would conceal what the woman had done, and not rather proclaim it the more? Nay, it added to the infamy of his death, for hereby he becomes a self-murderer. Better have it said, *a woman slew him*, than that it should be said, his servant slew him by his own order; yet now both will be said of him, to his everlasting reproach. And it is observable, that this very thing which Abimelech, was in such care to conceal, appears to have been more particularly remembred by posterity, than most passages of this history, for Joab speaks of it, as that which he expected David would reproach him with, for coming so *nigh the wall*, 2 Sam. xi. 21. The ignominy we seek to avoid by sin, we do but perpetuate the remembrance of.

Now the issue of all is, that Abimelech being slain, (1.) Israel's peace was restored, an end was put to this civil war, for they that followed him, *departed every man unto his place*, ver. 55. (2.) God's justice was glorified, ver. 56, 57. *Thus God punished the wickedness of Abimelech, and of the men of Shechem*, and performed Jotham's curse, for it was not a curse causeless. Thus he preserved the honour of his government, and gave warning to all ages to expect blood for blood. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth, when the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Tho' wickedness may prosper a while, it will not prosper always.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, 1. *The peaceable times Israel enjoyed under the government of two judges, Tola and Jair*, ver. 1—5. 2. *The troublous times that ensued*. 1. *Israel's sin that brought them into trouble*, ver. 6. 2. *The trouble it self they were in*, ver. 7—9. 3. *Their repentance and humiliation for sin, their prayers and reformation, and the mercy they found with God thereupon*, ver. 10—16. 4. *Preparation made for their deliverance out of the hand of their oppressors*, ver. 17, 18.

1. **A**ND after Abimelech, there arose to defend Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. 2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. 3. ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty

twenty and two years. 4. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass-colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. 5. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

Quiet and peaceable reigns, tho' the best to live in, are the worst to write of, as yielding least variety of matter for the historian to entertain his reader with; such were the reigns of these two judges, Tola and Jair, who make but a small figure, and take up but a very little room in this history. But, no doubt, they were both raised up of God to serve their country in the quality of judges, not pretending, as Abimelech had done, to the grandeur of kings, nor, like him, taking the honour they had to themselves, but were called of God to it.

1. Concerning Tola, it is said, that he arose after Abimelech to defend Israel, *ver. 1.* After Abimelech had debauched Israel by his wickedness, disquieted and disturbed them by his restless ambition, and by the mischiefs he brought on them, exposed to enemies from abroad, God spirited this good man to appear for the reforming of abuses, the putting down of idolatry, the appeasing of tumults, and the healing of the wounds given to the state by Abimelech's usurpation. Thus he saved them from themselves, and guarded them against their enemies. He was of the tribe of Issachar, a tribe disposed to serve, for he bowed his shoulder to bear, *Gen. xlix. 14, 15.* yet one of that tribe is here raised up to rule, for those that humble themselves shall be exalted. He bore the name of him that was ancestor to the first family of that tribe; of the sons of Issachar Tola was the first, *Gen. xlvii. 13. Numb. xxvi. 23.* It signifies a worm, yet being the name of his ancestor he was not ashamed of it. Tho' he was of Issachar, yet when he was raised up to the government he came and dwelt in mount Ephraim, which was more in the heart of the country, that the people might the more conveniently resort to him for judgment. He judged Israel twenty-three years, *ver. 2.* kept things in good order, but did not any thing very memorable.

2. Jair was a Gileadite, so was his next successor Jephthah, both of that half-tribe of the tribe of Manasseh, which lay on the other side Jordan; tho' they seemed separated from their brethren, yet God took care that while the honour of the government was shifted from tribe to tribe, and before it settled in Judah, that they who lay remote should sometimes share in it, putting more abundant honour on that part which lacked. Jair bore the name of a very famous man of the same tribe, who in Moses's time was very active in reducing this country, *Numb. xxxii. 41. Josh. xiii. 30.* That which is chiefly remarkable concerning this Jair is the increase and honour of his family, he had thirty sons, *ver. 4.* And (1.) They had good preferments, for they rode on thirty ass-colts, i. e. They were judges itinerant, that, as deputies to their father, rode from place to place in their several circuits to administer justice. We find afterwards that Samuel made his sons judges, tho' he could not make them good ones, *1 Sam. viii. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) They had good possessions; every one a city, out of those that were called from their ancestor, of the same name with their father, Havoth-jair. The villages of Jair; yet they are called cities, either because those young gentlemen to whom they were assigned, enlarged and fortified them, and so improved them into cities; or because they were as well pleased with their lot in those country towns, as if they had been cities compact together, and fenced with gates and bars. Villages are cities to a contented mind.

6. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. 7. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. 8. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. 9. Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan, to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

While those two judges, Tola and Jair, presided in the affairs of Israel, things went well, but afterwards,

1. Israel returned to their idolatry, that sin which did most easily beset them, *ver. 6.* they did evil again in the sight of the Lord, from whom they were unaccountably bent to back-slide, as a foolish people and unwise. (1.) They worshipped many gods; not only their old demons, Baalim and Ashtaroth, which the Canaanites had worshipped, but as if they would proclaim their folly to all their neighbours, they served the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. It looks as if the chief trade of Israel

were to import deities from all countries. It is hard to say, whether it was more impious, or impolitick to do this. By introducing these foreign deities, they rendered themselves mean and despicable, for no nation that had any sense of honour changed their gods. Much of the wealth of Israel, we may suppose, was carried out, in offerings to the temples of the deities in the several countries from whence they came, on which, as their mother churches, their temples in Israel were expected to own their dependence; the priests and devotees of those sorry deities, would follow their gods, no doubt, in crowds into the land of Israel, and if they could not live in their own country would take root there, and so strangers would devour their strength. If they did it in complement to their neighbour nations, and to ingratiate themselves with them, justly were they disappointed, for those nations which by their wicked arts they sought to make their friends, by the righteous judgments of God became their enemies and oppressors, *In quo quis peccat, in eo punitur.* (2.) They did not so much as admit the God of Israel to be one of those many deities they worshipped, but quite cast him off, they forsook the Lord, and served not him at all. Those that think to serve both God and mammon, will soon come intirely to forsake God, and serve mammon only. If God have not all the heart, he will soon have none of it.

2. God renewed his judgments upon them, bringing them under the power of oppressing enemies. Had they fallen into the hands of the Lord, immediately they might have found that his mercies were great, but God let them fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel, he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, that lay south-west of Canaan, and of the Ammonites that lay north-east, both at the same time; so that between those two millstones they were miserably crushed, as the original word is, *ver. 8.* for oppressed. God had appointed that if any of the cities of Israel should revolt to idolatry, the rest should make war upon them, and cut them off, *Deut. xiii. 12, &c.* they had been jealous enough in that matter, almost to an extremity, in the case of the altar set up by the two tribes and a half, *Josh. xxii.* but now they were grown so very bad, that when one city was infected with idolatry the next took the infection, and instead of punishing it, imitated and out-did it; and therefore since they that should have been revengers to execute wrath on them that did this evil, were themselves guilty, or bore the sword in vain, God brought the neighbour nations upon them to chastise them for their apostasy.

The oppression of Israel by the Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, was, 1. very long, it continued eighteen years. Some make those years to be part of the judgeship of Jair, who could not prevail to reform and deliver Israel as he would. Others make them to commence at the death of Jair, which seems the more probable, because that part of Israel which was most infested by the Ammonites was Gilead, Jair's own country, which we cannot suppose to have suffered so much while he was living, but that that part at least would be reformed and protected. 2. Very grievous, they vexed them and oppressed them. It was a great vexation to be oppressed by such a despicable people as the children of Ammon were. They began with those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, here called the land of the Amorites, *ver. 8.* because the Israelites were so wretchedly degenerated, and had made themselves so like the heathen, that they were become in a manner perfect Amorites, *Ezek. xvi. 3.* Or, because by their sin they forfeited their title to this land, so that it might justly be looked upon as the land of the Amorites again, from whom they took it. But by degrees they pushed forward, came over Jordan, and invaded Judah, and Benjamin, and Ephraim, *ver. 9.* three of the most famous tribes of Israel, yet thus insulted, when they had forsaken God, and unable to make head against the invader. Now the threatening was fulfilled, that they should be slain before their enemies, and should have no power to stand before them, *Lev. xxvi. 17, 37.* Their ways and their doings procure this to themselves; they are sadly degenerated, and so they come to be sorely distressed.

10. ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. 11. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? 12. The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. 15. ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned, do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. 16. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the

the misery of Israel. 17. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead: and the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh. 18. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Here is, 1. A humble confession which Israel makes to God, in their distress, *ver. 10.* Now they own themselves guilty like a malefactor upon the rack, and promise reformation like a child under the rod. They did not only complain of the distress, but acknowledged it was their own sin that brought them into the distress, therefore God was righteous, and they had no reason to repine. They confess their omissions, for in them their sin began, we have forsaken our God; and their commissions, we have served Baalim, and herein have done foolishly, treacherously, and very wickedly.

2. A humbling message which God thereupon sends to Israel, whether by an angel, as *chap. ii. 1.* or by a prophet, as *chap. vi. 8.* is not certain. It was kind that God took notice of their cry, and did not turn a deaf ear to it, and send them no answer at all; it was kind likewise that when they began to repent, he sent them such a message as was proper to further and promote their repentance, that they might be qualified and prepared for deliverance. Now in this message, (1.) He upbraids them with their great ingratitude, minds them of the great things he has done for them, delivering them from such and such enemies; the Egyptians first, out of whose land they were rescued, the Amorites whom they conquered, and in whose land they entred, and since their settlement there, when the Amorites had joined with the Moabites to oppress them, *chap. iii. 13.* when the Philistines were vexatious in the days of Shamgar, and afterwards other enemies had given them trouble, upon their petition God had wrought many a great salvation for them, *ver. 11, 12.* Of their being oppressed by the Zidonians, and the Maonites we read not elsewhere: God had in justice corrected them, and in mercy delivered them, and therefore might have expected that either for fear, or for love, they should have stuck to him and his service, well therefore might the word cut them to the heart, *ver. 13.* yet *ye have forsaken me* that have brought you out of your troubles, and *served other gods* that brought you into your troubles. Thus did they *forsake their own mercies for their own delusions.* (2.) He shews them how justly he might now abandon them to ruin, by abandoning them to the *gods that they had served.* To awaken them to a thorough repentance and reformation, he lets them see, 1. Their folly in serving Baalim; they had been at a vast expence to obtain the favour of such gods as could not help them, then when they had most need of their help. *Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen,* *ver. 14.* try what they can do for you now; you have worshipped them as gods, try if they have now either a divine power, or a divine goodness to be employed for you, you payed your homage to them as your kings and lords, try if they will now protect you, you brought your sacrifices of praise to their altars as your benefactors, imagining that they gave you your corn and wine and oil, but a friend indeed will be a friend at need, what stead will their favour stand you in now? Note, It is necessary in true repentance, that there be a full conviction of the utter insufficiency of all those things to help us, and do us any kindness, which we have idolized, and set upon the throne in our hearts, in competition with God. We must be convinced that the pleasures of sense, on which we have doted, cannot be our satisfaction, nor the wealth of the world which we have coveted be our portion, that we cannot be happy or easy any where but in God. 2. Their misery and danger in forsaking God. See what a pass you have brought yourselves to; now you can expect no other but that I should say, *I will deliver you no more,* and what will become of you then? *ver. 13.* This he tells them not only as what he might do, but as what he would do if they rested in a confession of what they had done amiss, and did not put away their idols and amend for the future.

3. An humble submission which Israel hereupon made to God's justice, with an humble application to his mercy, *ver. 15.* The children of Israel met together, it is likely in a solemn assembly at the door of the tabernacle, received the impressions of the message God had sent them, were not driven by it to despair tho' it was very threatening, but resolve to lie at God's feet, and if they perish they will perish there. They not only repeat their confession, *we have sinned.* But, 1. They surrender themselves to God's justice, *do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee.* Hereby they own that they deserved the severest tokens of God's displeasure, and were sure he could do them no wrong whatever he laid upon them; they humble themselves under his mighty and heavy hand, and *accept of the punishment of their iniquity,* which Moses had made the condition of God's return in mercy to them, *Lev. xxvi. 41.* Note, true penitents dare and will refer themselves to God to correct them as he thinks fit, knowing that their sin is highly malignant in its deserts, and that God is not rigorous or extream in his demands. 2. They supplicate for God's mercy, and implore that, *deliver us only we pray thee this day,* from

this enemy. They acknowledge what they deserved, yet pray to God not to deal with them according to their deserts. Note, We must submit to God's justice with a hope in his mercy.

4. A blessed reformation set on foot hereupon. They brought forth fruits meet for repentance, *ver. 16.* they put away the gods of strangers, (as the word is) strange gods; and worshipped by those nations that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and to the covenants of promise, and they served the Lord. Need drove them to him. They knew it was to no purpose to go to the gods whom they had served, and therefore return to the God whom they had slighted. This is true repentance not only for sin, but from sin.

5. God's gracious return in mercy to them, which is expressed here very tenderly, *ver. 16.* his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Not that there is any grief in God, he has infinite joy and happiness in himself, which cannot be broke in upon by either the sins or the miseries of his creatures: nor that there is any change in God, he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But his goodness is his glory; by it he proclaims his name, and magnifies it above all his name; and as he is pleased to put himself into the relation of a Father to his people that are in covenant with him, so he is pleased to represent his goodness to them, by the compassions of a father towards his children; for as he is the Father of lights, so he is the Father, of mercies; as the disobedience and misery of a child is a grief to a tender father and makes him feel very sensibly from his natural affection, so the provocations of God's people are a grief to him, *Psal. xcv. 10.* he is broken with their whorish heart, *Ezek. vi. 9.* their troubles also are a grief to him; so he is pleased to speak when he is pleased to appear for the deliverance of his people; changing his way and method of proceeding, as tender parents when they begin to relent towards their children, with whom they have been displeased. Such are the tender mercies of our God, and so far is he from having any pleasure in the death of sinners.

6. Things are now working towards their deliverance from the Ammonites oppression, *ver. 17, 18.* God had said, I will deliver you no more, but now they are not what they were, they are other men, they are new men, and now, he will deliver them. That threatening was denounced to convince and humble them, and now it had taken its desired effect, it is revoked, in order to their deliverance. (1.) The Ammonites are hardened to their own ruin, they gathered together in one body, that they might be destroyed at one blow, *Rev. xvi. 16.* (2.) The Israelites are animated and spirited to their own rescue. They assembled likewise, *ver. 17.* During the eighteen years oppression, as in their former fervitudes they were run down by their enemies, because they would not incorporate; each family, city, or tribe, would stand by it self, and act independently, and so they all became an easy prey to the oppressors, for want of a due sense of a common interest to cement them: but whenever they got together, they did well; so they did here. When God's Israel become as one man to advance a common good, and oppose a common enemy, what difficulty can stand before them. The people and princes of Gilead being met, consult first about a general, that should command in chief against the Ammonites. Hitherto most of the deliverers of Israel had an extraordinary call to the office, as Ehud, Barak, Gideon, but the next is to be called in a more common way, by a convention of the states, who enquired out a fit man to command their army, found out one admirably well qualified for the purpose, and God owned their choice by putting his Spirit upon him, *chap. xi. 29.* So that this instance is of use for direction and encouragement in after ages, when extraordinary calls are no longer to be expected. Let such be impartially chosen to publick trust and power, whom God has qualified, and then God will graciously own those who are thus chosen.

CHAP. XI.

This chapter gives us the history of Jephthah, another of Israel's judges, and numbred among the worthies of the Old Testament, that by faith did great things, *Heb. xi. 32.* tho' he had not such an extraordinary call as the rest there mentioned had. Here is, 1. The disadvantages of his rise and original, *ver. 1—3.* 2. The Gileadites choice of him, to be commander in chief against the Ammonites, and the terms he made with them, *ver. 4—11.* 3. His treaty with the king of Ammon, about the rights of the two nations, that the matter might be determined, if possible, without bloodshed, *ver. 12—28.* 4. His war with the Ammonites, which he enters upon with a solemn vow, *ver. 29—31.* prosecutes with bravery, *ver. 32.* and ends with a glorious victory, *ver. 33.* 5. The straits he was brought into at his return to his own house, by the vow he had made; *ver. 34—40.*

1. NOW Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 2. And Gilead's wife bare him sons, and his wives sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our fathers house, for thou art the son of a strange

strange woman. 3. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

The princes and people of Gilead we left in the close of the foregoing chapter, consulting about the choice of a general, being come to this resolve, that whoever would undertake to lead their forces against the children of Ammon, should by common consent be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. The enterprize was difficult, and it was fit so great an encouragement as this should be proposed to him that would undertake it. Now all agreed that Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, and very fit for their purpose, none so fit as he, but he lay under three disadvantages.

1. He was the son of an harlot, ver. 1. of a strange woman, ver. 2. one that was neither a wife nor a concubine; some think his mother was a Gentile; so Josephus, who calls him a stranger by the mother's side. An Ishmaelite, say the Jews. If his mother was a harlot, that was not his fault, however it was his disgrace. Men ought not to be reproached with any of the infelicities of their parentage or extraction, so long as they are endeavouring by their personal merits to roll away the reproach. The son of a harlot if born again, born from above, shall be accepted of God, and be as welcome as any other to the glorious liberties of his children. Jephthah could not read in the law the brand there put on the Ammonites, the enemies he was to grapple with, that they should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, but in the same paragraph he met with that which looked black upon himself, that a bastard should be in like manner excluded, Deut. xxiii. 2, 3. But if that law means, as most probably it doth, only those that are born of incest, not of fornication, he was not within the reach of it.

2. He had been driven his country by his brethren. His father's legitimate children, insisting upon the rigour of the law, thrust him out from having any inheritance with them, without any consideration had of his extraordinary qualifications, which merited a dispensation, and would have made him a mighty strength and ornament of their family, if they had overlooked his being a by-blow; and admitted him to a child's part, ver. 2. One would not have thought this abandoned youth was intended to be Israel's deliverer and judge, but God often humbles those whom he designs to exalt, and makes that stone the head of the corner which the builders refused; so Joseph, Moses, and David, the three most eminent of the shepherds of Israel, were all thrust out by men, before they were called of God to their great offices.

3. He had in his exile headed a rabble, ver. 3. Being driven out by his brethren, his great soul would not suffer him either to dig, or beg, but by his sword he must live; and being soon noted for his bravery, those that were reduced to such straits, and animated by such a spirit, lifted themselves under him. Vain men they are here called, i. e. men that had run through their estates and were to seek for a livelihood, those went out with him, not to rob or plunder, but to hunt wild beasts, and perhaps to make incursions upon those countries which Israel was entitled to, but were not as yet come to the possession of, or were some way or other injured by.

This is the man that must save Israel. That people had by their idolatry made themselves children of whoredoms, and aliens from God and his covenant, and therefore tho' God upon their repentance will deliver them, yet, to mortify them, and mind them of their sin, he chuseth to do it by a bastard, and an exile.

4. ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. 5. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: 6. And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. 7. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my fathers house? and why are ye come unto me now, when ye are in distress? 8. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. 9. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head? 10. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. 11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

No. xviii.

Here is, 1. The distress which the children of Israel were in upon the Ammonites invasion of their country, ver. 4. Probably this was the same invasion with that mentioned, chap. x. 17. When the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in, or against, Gilead. And those words, in process of time, refer to what goes immediately before of the expulsion of Jephthah; many days after he had been thus thrust out in disgrace was he fetched back again with honour.

2. The court which the elders made to Jephthah hereupon, to come and help them. They did not write or send a messenger to him, but went themselves to fetch him, resolving to have no denial, and the exigence of the case was such, as would admit no delay. Their errand to him was, ver. 6. Come, and be our captain. They knew none among themselves that was able to undertake that great trust, but do in effect confess themselves unfit for it; they know him to be a stout man, and enured to the sword, and therefore he must be the man. See how God prepares men for the service he designs them for, and makes their troubles work for their advancement. If Jephthah had not been put to his shifts by his brethren's unkindness, he had not had such occasion as that gave him, to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so to signalize himself, and become famous, Out of the eater comes forth meat. The children of Israel were assembled and encamped, chap. x. 17. But an army without a general, is like a body without a head, therefore come, (say they) and be our captain that we may fight. See the necessity of government; tho' they were hearty enough in the cause, yet they owned they could not fight without a captain to command them. So necessary is it to all societies, that there be a pars imperans, and a pars subdita, some to rule, and others to obey, that any community would humbly beg the favour of being commanded, rather than that every man should be his own master. Blessed be God for government, for a good government.

3. The objection Jephthah makes against accepting their offer, ver. 7. Did not ye hate me and expel me? It should seem that his brethren were some of these elders, or these elders by suffering his brethren to abuse him, and not righting him as they ought to have done, for their business is to defend the poor and fatherless, Psal. lxxxii. 3, 4. had made themselves guilty of his expulsion, and he might justly charge them with it. Magistrates that have power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong. You hated me and expelled me, and therefore how can I believe that you are sincere in this proposal? and how can you expect that I should do you any service? Not but that Jephthah was very willing to serve his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former unkindnesses to him, that they might repent of their sin in using him so ill, and might for the future be the more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren, before he made himself known to them. The particular case between the Gileadites and Jephthah was a resemblance of the general state of the case between Israel and God at this time: they had thrust God out by their idolatries, yet in their distress begged his help, he told them how justly he might have rejected them, and yet graciously delivered them. So did Jephthah. Many slight God and good men till they come to be in distress, and then they are desirous of God's mercy, and good mens prayers.

4. Their urgency with him to accept the government they offer him, ver. 8. Therefore because we formerly did thee that wrong, and to shew thee that we repent of it, and would gladly atone for it, we turn again to thee now, to put such an honour upon thee as shall balance that indignity. Let this instance be (1.) A caution to us not to despise or trample upon any, because they are mean, or to be injurious to any that we have advantage against, because whatever we think of them now, the time may come when we may have need of them, and would be glad to be beholden to them. It is our wisdom to make no man our enemy, because we know not how soon our distresses may be such, as that we may be highly concerned to make him our friend. (2.) An encouragement to men of worth that are slighted and ill treated, let them bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, and leave it to God to make their light shine out of obscurity. Fuller's remark on this story in his Pisgah sight is this; Virtue once in an age will work her own advancement, and when such as hate it chance to need it, they will be forced to prefer it, and then the honour will appear the brighter.

5. The bargain he makes with them. He had mentioned the injuries they had formerly done him, but perceiving their repentance, his spirit was too great and generous to mention them any more. God had forgiven Israel the affronts they had done him, chap. x. 17. and therefore Jephthah will forgive. Only he thinks it prudent to make his bargain wisely for the future, since he deals with men that he had reason to distrust. (1.) He puts them a fair question, ver. 9. He speaks not with too much confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the further punishment of Israel; but puts an if upon it. Nor doth he speak with any confidence at all in himself, if he do succeed, it is the Lord that delivers them into his hand, intending hereby to mind his countrymen to look up to God, as arbitrator of the controversy, and the giver of victory, for so he did. Now if by the blessing of God I come home a conqueror,

conqueror, tell me plainly *shall I be your head?* If I deliver you under God, shall I, under him, reform you? The same question is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. If he save you, will ye be willing that he shall rule you? for on no other terms will he save you: if he make you happy, shall he make you holy? if he be your helper, shall he be your head? (2.) They immediately give him a positive answer, *ver. 10. we will do according to thy words*, command us in war, and thou shalt command us in peace. They do not take time to consider of it, the case was too plain to need a debate, and the necessity too pressing to admit a delay; they knew they had power to conclude a treaty for those whom they represented, and therefore bound it with an oath, *The Lord be witness between us*. They appeal to God's omniscience as the judge of their present sincerity, and to his justice as an avenger, if afterwards they should prove false. *The Lord be a hearer*, so the word is. Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that God is a hearer, and to speak accordingly. Thus was the original contract ratified between Jephthah and the Gileadites, which all Israel it should seem agreed to afterwards, for it is said, *chap. xii. 7. he judged Israel*. He hereupon went with them, *ver. 11. to the place where they were all assembled, chap. x. 17. and there by common consent, they made him head and captain*, and so ratified the bargain their representatives had made with him, that he should be not only captain now, but head for life. Jephthah to obtain this little honour, was willing to expose his life for them, (*chap. xii. 3.*) and shall we be discouraged in our christian warfare by any of the difficulties we may meet with in it, when Christ himself has promised *a crown of life, to him that overcometh?*

6. Jephthah's pious acknowledgment of God in this great affair, *ver. 11. he uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh*. That is, upon his elevation he presently retired to his devotions, and in prayer spread the whole matter before God, both his choice to the office, and his execution of the office, as one that had his eye ever towards the Lord, and would do nothing without him, that leaned not to his own understanding or courage, but depended on God and his favour. He utters before God all his thoughts and cares in this matter, for he gives us leave to be free with him. (1.) Lord, the people have made me their head, wilt thou confirm the choice, and own me as thy peoples head under thee, and for thee? God justly complains of Israel, *Hos. viii. 4. they have set up kings but not by me*; Lord, saith Jephthah, I will be no head of their making without thee. I will not accept the government unless thou give leave. Had Abimelech done this he might have prospered. (2.) Lord, they have made me their captain, to go before them in this war with the Ammonites. Shall I have thy presence? wilt thou go before me? if not, carry me not up hence? Lord, satisfy me in the justice of the cause. Assure me of success in the enterprize. This is a rare example to be imitated by all, particularly by great ones; in all our ways let us acknowledge God; seek his favour; ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; so shall we make our way prosperous. Thus Jephthah opened the campaign with prayer. It was likely to end gloriously, which began piously.

12. ¶ And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me, to fight in my land? 13. And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon, even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. 14. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: 15. And said unto him, Thus said Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: 16. But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness, unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh; 17. Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh. 18. Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east-side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab. 19. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place. 20. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that

country. 22. And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan. 23. So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? 24. Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess. 25. And now art thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, 26. While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover them within that time? 27. Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. 28. Howbeit, the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah, which he sent him.

We have here the treaty between Jephthah, now judge of Israel, and the king of the Ammonites, who is not named; that the controversy between the two nations, might, if possible, be accommodated without the effusion of blood.

1. Jephthah, as one having authority, sent to the king of Ammon, who in this war was the aggressor, to demand his reasons for invading the land of Israel, *ver. 12. Why art thou come to fight against me in my land?* Had I come first into thy land to disturb thee in thy possession, that had been reason enough for fighting against me, for how must force be repelled but by force; but what hast thou to do to come thus in a hostile manner into my land? so he calls it in the name both of God and Israel. Now this fair demand shews, (1.) That Jephthah did not delight in war, tho' he were a mighty man of valour, but was willing to prevent it by a peaceable accommodation. If he could by reason persuade the invaders to retire, he would not compel them to do it by the sword. War should be the last remedy, not to be used till all other methods of ending matters in variance have been tried in vain. *Ratio ultima regum*. This rule should be observed in going to law. The sword of justice as well as the sword of war must not be appealed to, till the contending parties have first endeavoured by gentler means to understand one another, and accommodate matters in variance. *1 Cor. vi. 1.* (2.) That Jephthah did delight in equity, and designed no other but to do justice. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites. If not, it was plain by their invasion they did Israel wrong and he was ready to maintain the rights of the Israelites. A sense of justice should guide and govern us in all our undertakings.

2. The king of the Ammonites now gives in his demand, which he should have published before he had invaded Israel, *ver. 13.* His pretence is, Israel took away my land long since, now therefore restore those lands. We have reason to think the Ammonites, when they made this descent upon Israel, meant no other but to spoil and plunder the country, and enrich themselves with the prey, as they had done formerly under Eglon, *chap. iii. 13.* When no such demand as this was made, tho' the matter was then fresh; but when Jephthah demanded the cause of their quarrel, and they could not for shame own what was their true intent and meaning, some old musty records were searched, or some ancient traditions inquired into, and from them this reason trumped up to serve the present turn, for a colourable pretence of equity in the invasion. Even those that do the greatest wrong, yet have such a conviction in their consciences of justice, that they would seem to do right. *Restore those lands*. See upon what uncertain terms we hold our worldly possessions, what we think we have the surest hold of, may be challenged from us, and wrested out of our hands. Those that are got to the heavenly Canaan, need not fear having their titles questioned.

3. Jephthah gives in a very full and satisfactory answer to this demand, shewing it to be altogether unjust and unreasonable, and that the Ammonites had no title to this country that lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, now in the possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. As one very well versed in the history of his country, he shews,

1. That Israel never took any land away, either from the Moabites or Ammonites; he puts them together because they were brethren, the children of Lot, near neighbours, and of united interests, having the same God, Chemosh, and perhaps sometimes the same king. The lands in question Israel took away, not from the Moabites or Ammonites, they had particular orders from God, not to meddle with them, or any thing they had, *Deut. ii. 9, 19.* and religiously observed their orders; but they found them in the possession of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and out of his hand they took them, justly and honourably, as he will shew afterwards. If

If the Amorites, before Israel came into that country, had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, as it should seem they had, *Numb. xxi. 26. Josh. xiii. 25.* Israel was not concerned to inquire into that, or answer for it. If the Ammonites had lost these lands, and their title to them; the children of Israel were under no obligation to recover the possession for them. Their business was to conquer for themselves, not for other people. This is his first plea, not guilty of the trespass.

2. That they were so far from invading the property of any other nations, but only of the devoted posterity of cursed Canaan, (one of the branches of which the Amorites were, *Gen. x. 16.*) that they would not so much as force a passage through the country; either of the Edomites, the seed of Esau, or of the Moabites, the seed of Lot, but even after a very tedious march through the wilderness, with which they were sadly tired, (*ver. 16.*) when the king of Edom first, and afterwards the king of Moab denied them the courtesy of a way through their country, (*ver. 17.*) rather than give them any offence or annoyance, weary as they were, they put themselves to the further fatigue of compassing both the land of Edom, and that of Moab, and came not within the border of either, *ver. 18.* Note, Those that carry themselves inoffensively may take the comfort of it, and plead it against those that charge them with injustice and wrong-doing. Our *righteousness will answer for us in time to come*, *Gen. xxx. 33. and will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, *1 Pet. ii. 12.*

3. That in that war in which they took this land out of the hands of Sihon, king of the Amorites, he was the aggressor, and not they, *ver. 19, 20.* They sent a humble petition to him, for leave to go through his land, willing to give him any security for their good behaviour in their march, *Let us pass (say they) unto my place*, i. e. to the land of Canaan, that is the only place we call ours, and to which we are pressing forwards, not desiring a settlement here. But Sihon not only denied them this courtesy, as Edom and Moab had done, had he only done so, who knows but Israel might have gone about some other way, but he mustered all his forces, and fought against Israel, *ver. 20.* Not only shut them out of his own land, but would have cut them off from the face of the earth, *Numb. xxi. 23, 24.* aimed at nothing less than their ruin, *ver. 20.* Israel therefore in their war with him, stood in their own just and necessary defence, and therefore having routed his army, might justly, in further revenge of the injury, seize his country as forfeited; so Israel came to the possession of this country, and doubt not but to make good their title to it; and it is very unreasonable for the Ammonites to question their title, for the Amorites were the inhabitants of that country, and it was purely their land and their coasts that the Israelites then made themselves masters of, *ver. 21, 22.*

4. He pleads a grant from the crown, and claims under that, *ver. 23, 24.* It was not Israel, they were fatigued with their long march, and were not fit for action so soon; but it was the Lord God of Israel, who is king of nations, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, he it was that dispossessed the Amorites, and planted Israel in their room. God gave it them by an express and particular conveyance, such as vested the title in them, which they might make good against all the world, *Deut. ii. 24. I have given into thy hand Sihon and his land*, he gave it them, by giving them a compleat victory over the present occupants, notwithstanding the great disadvantages they were under: Can you think that God gave it us in such an extraordinary manner, with design that we should return it to the Moabites or Ammonites again, no, we put a higher value upon God's favours than to part with them so easily. To corroborate this plea, he urges him with an argument, *ad hominem*, *Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee?* He not only appeals to the common resolutions of men, to hold their own against all the world; but to the common religion of the nations, which they thought obliged them to make much of that which their gods gave them. Not that Jephthah thought Chemosh a god, only he is thy god, and the worshippers, even of those dunghill-deities, that could do neither good nor evil, yet thought themselves beholding to them for all they had, *Hos. ii. 12. These are my rewards which my lovers have given me: And see Judg. xvi. 24.* and made this a reason why they would hold it fast, that their gods gave it them. This thou thinkest a good title, and shall not we? The Ammonites had dispossessed those that dwell in their land before them, they thought they did it by the help of Chemosh their god, but really it was Jehovah, the God of Israel that did it for them, as is expressly said, *Deut. ii. 19, 21.* Now (saith Jephthah) we have as good a title to our country as you have to yours. Note, One instance of the honour and respect we owe to God, as our God, is rightly to possess that which he gives us to possess, receive it from him; use it for him, keep it for his sake, and part with it when he calls for it. He has given it us to possess, not to enjoy. He himself only must be enjoyed.

5. He pleads prescription. (1.) Their title had not been disputed, when they first entred upon it, *ver. 25.* Balak that was then king of Moab, from whom the greatest part of these lands had been taken by the Amorites, and who was most concerned, and best able to oppose us, if he had had any thing to object against our settlement there, yet sat still, and never offered to strive against Israel. He knew, that for his own part he had fairly

lost it to the Amorites, and was not able to recover it, and could not but acknowledge that Israel had fairly won it of the Amorites, and therefore all his care was to secure what was left, he never pretended a title to what was lost. See *Numb. xxii. 2, 3.* He then acquiesced in God's ways of disposing kingdoms, and wilt not thou now? (2.) Their possession had never yet been disturbed, *ver. 26.* He pleads that they had kept this country as their own, now about three hundred years, and the Ammonites in all that time had never attempted to take it from them, no, not when they had it in their power to oppress them, *chap. iii. 12, 13.* So that supposing their title had not been clear at the first, (which yet he had proved it was) yet no continual claim being made by so many descents, the entry of the children of Ammon, without doubt was barred for ever. A title so long unquestioned, shall be presumed unquestionable.

6. By these arguments Jephthah justifies himself and his own cause, *ver. 27.* I have not sinned against thee, in taking or keeping what I have no right to, if I had, I would instantly make restitution; and condemns the Ammonites, *thou dost me wrong to war against me*, and must expect to speed accordingly. It seems to me an evidence, that the children of Israel, in the days of their prosperity and power (for some such days they had in the times of the judges) had carried themselves very inoffensively to all their neighbours, and had not been vexatious, or oppressing to them (either by way of reprisal, or under colour of propagating their religion) that the king of the Ammonites, when he would seek an occasion of quarrelling with them, was forced to look three hundred years back for a pretence. It becomes the people of God thus to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.

7. For the deciding of the controversy, he puts himself upon God and his sword, and the king of Ammon joined issue with him, *ver. 27, 28. The Lord the Judge, be judge this day.* With this solemn reference of the matter to the Judge of heaven and earth, he designs either to deter the Ammonites from proceeding, and oblige them to retire, when they saw the right of the cause was against them, or to justify himself in subduing them, if they should go on. Note, War is an appeal to heaven, to God the Judge of all, to whom the issues of it belong. If doubtful rights be disputed, he is thereby requested to determine them. If manifest rights be invaded or denied, he is thereby applied to for the vindicating of what is just, and the punishing of wrong. As the sword of justice was made for lawless and disobedient persons, *1 Tim. i. 9.* so was the sword of war made for lawless and disobedient princes and nations. In war therefore the eye must be ever up to God, and it must always be thought a dangerous thing to desire, or expect that God should patronize unrighteousness.

Neither Jephthah's apology, nor his appeal, wrought upon the king of the children of Ammon; they had found the sweet of the spoil of Israel, in the eighteen years wherein they had oppressed them, *chap. x. 8.* and hoped now to make themselves masters of the tree which they had so often enriched themselves with the fruit of. He hearkned not to the words of Jephthah, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

29. ¶ Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. 30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31. Then it shall be, That whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORDS, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. 32. ¶ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities; and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34. ¶ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances, and she was his only child: beside her he had neither son nor daughter. 35. And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. 36. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. 37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months; that I may go up and down upon the

the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

We have here Jephthah triumphing in a glorious victory, but, as an allay to his joy, troubled and distressed by an unadvised vow.

1. Jephthah's victory was clear, and shines very bright, both to his honour, and to the honour of God, his in pleading, and God's in owning, a righteous cause.

(1.) God gave him an excellent spirit, and he used it bravely, *ver. 29.* Then when it appeared by the peoples unanimous choice of him for their leader, that he had so clear a call to engage, and by the obstinate deafness of the king of Ammon to the proposals of accommodation, that he had so just a cause to engage in, then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and very much advanced his natural faculties, enduing him with power from on high, and making him more bold, and more wise than ever he had been, and more fired with a holy zeal against the enemies of his people. Hereby God confirmed him in his office, and assured him of success in his undertaking. Thus animated, he loseth no time, but with an undaunted resolution takes the field. Particular notice is taken of the way by which he advanced towards the enemies camp, probably, because the choice of it was an instance of that extraordinary conduct with which the Spirit of the Lord had furnished him; for those who sincerely walk after the Spirit shall be led forth the right way.

(2.) God gave him eminent success, and he bravely improved that too, *ver. 32.* *The Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hand,* and so gave judgment upon the appeal, in favour of the righteous cause, and made those feel the force of war, that would not yield to the force of reason, for he *sits in the throne, judging right.* Jephthah lost not the advantages given him, but pursued and completed his victory, having routed their forces in the field, he pursued them to their cities, where he put to the sword all he found in arms, so as utterly to disable them to give Israel any molestation, *ver. 33.* But it doth not appear that he utterly destroyed the people, as Joshua had done those of the devoted nations, or that he offered to make himself master of the country, tho' their pretensions to the land of Israel might have given him colour to do so, only he took care that they should be effectually subdued. Tho' others attempting wrong to us, will justify us in the defence of our own right, yet it will not authorize us to do them wrong.

2. Jephthah's vow is dark, and much in the clouds. When he was going out from his own house upon this hazardous undertaking, in prayer to God for his presence with him, he makes a secret, but solemn, vow, or religious promise to God, that if God would graciously bring him back a conqueror, whosoever, or whatsoever, should first come out of his house to meet him, it should be devoted to God, and offered up for a burnt-offering: at his return, tidings of his victory coming home before him, his own and only daughter meets him with the seasonable expressions of joy; this puts him into a great confusion, but there was no remedy, after she had taken some time to lament her own infelicity, she cheerfully submitted to the performance of his vow.

Now, 1. There are several good lessons to be learned out of this story. (1.) That there may be remainders of distrust and doubting even in the hearts of true and great believers. Jephthah had reason enough to be confident of success, especially when he found *the Spirit of the Lord come upon him,* and yet now it comes to the setting, he seems to hesitate, *ver. 30.* *If thou shalt without fail deliver them into my hand,* then I will do so and so. And perhaps the snare into which his vow brought him, was designed to correct the weakness of his faith, and a fond conceit he had that he could not promise himself a victory, unless he profered something considerable to be given to God in lieu of it. (2.) That yet it is very good when we are in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, to make vows to God of some instance of acceptable service to him, not as a purchase of the favour we desire, but as an expression of our gratitude to him, and the deep sense we will have of our obligations to render according to the benefit done to us. The matter of such a singular vow (*Lev. xxvii. 2.*) must be something that has a plain and direct tendency, either to the advancement of God's glory, and the interests of his kingdom among men, or to the furtherance of ourselves in his service, and in that which is antecedently our duty. (3.) That we have great need to be very cautious, and well advised in the making of such vows, lest by indulging a present pang, even of pious zeal, we entangle our own consciences, involve ourselves in perplexities, and are forced at last to say before the angel that it was an error, *Eccl. v. 2—6.* *It is a snare to a man hastily to devour that which is holy, without due consideration, (quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusant)* and without inserting the needful proviso's and limitations which might prevent the entanglement, and then after vows, to make

the enquiry, which should have been made before, *Prov. xx. 25.* Let Jephthah's harm be our warning in this matter. See *Deut. xxiii. 22.* (4.) That what we have solemnly vowed to God, we must conscientiously perform, if it be possible and lawful, tho' it be never so difficult and grievous to us. Jephthah's sense of the powerful obligation of his vow must always be ours, *ver. 35.* *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord in a solemn vow, and I cannot go back, i. e.* I cannot recal the vow myself, it is too late, nor can any power on earth dispense with it, or give me up my bond. The thing was mine own, and in mine own power, *Acts v. 4.* but now it is not. *Vow and pay, Psal. lxxvi. 11.* We deceive ourselves if we think to mock God. If we apply this to the consent we have solemnly given in our sacramental vows to the covenant of grace, made with poor sinners in Christ, what a powerful argument will it be against the sins we have by those vows bound ourselves out from, and what a strange inducement to the duties we have thereby bound ourselves up to, and what a ready answer to every temptation, *I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back, I must therefore go forward; I have sworn, and I must, I will, perform it.* Let me not dare to play fast and loose with God. (5.) That it well becomes children, obediently and cheerfully to submit to their parents in the Lord, and particularly to comply with their pious resolutions for the honour of God, and the keeping up of religion in their families, tho' they be harsh and severe, as the Rechabites, who for many generations religiously observed the commands of Jonadab their father, in forbearing wine, and Jephthah's daughter here, who for the satisfying of her father's conscience, and for the honour of God and her country, yielded herself as one devoted, *ver. 36.* *Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth;* I know I am dear to thee, but am well content that God should be dearer. The father might disallow any vow made by the daughter, *Numb. xxx. 5.* But the daughter could not disallow or disannul, no, not such a vow as this made by the father. This magnifies the law of the fifth commandment. (6.) That our friends grievances should be our griefs. Where she went to bewail her hard fate, the virgins, her companions, joined with her in her lamentations, *ver. 38.* With those of her own sex and age she used to associate, who, no doubt, now her father was of a sudden grown so great, expected shortly after his return to dance at her wedding, but were heavily disappointed, when they were called to retire to the mountains with her and share in her griefs. Those are unworthy the name of friends, that will only rejoice with us, and not weep with us. (7.) That heroic zeal for the honour of God and Israel, tho' allayed with infirmity and indiscretion, is worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. It well became the daughters of Israel, by an annual solemnity to preserve the honourable memory of Jephthah's daughter, who made light, even of her own life, like a noble heroine, when God had taken vengeance of Israel's enemies, *ver. 36.* Such a rare instance of one that preferred the publick interest before life itself, was never to be forgotten. Her sex forbade her to follow her father to the war, and so to expose her life in battle, in lieu of which she hazards it much more (and perhaps apprehended that she did so, having some intimation of his vow, and did it designedly, for he tells her, *ver. 35.* *Thou hast brought me very low*) to grace his triumphs. So transported was she with the victory as a common benefit, that she was willing to be herself offered up as a thank-offering for it, and would think her life well bestowed, when laid down on so great an occasion. She thinks it an honour to die, not as a sacrifice of atonement for the peoples sins, (that honour was reserved for Christ only) but as a sacrifice of acknowledgment for the peoples mercies. (8.) From Jephthah's concern on this occasion, we must learn, not to think it strange, if the day of our triumphs in this world, prove upon some account or other the day of our griefs, and therefore must always rejoice with trembling; we hope for a day of triumph hereafter which will have no allay.

2. Yet there are some difficult questions that do arise upon this story, which have very much employed the pens of learned men, I will say but little to them, because Mr Poole has discussed them very fully in his English annotations.

1. It is hard to say, what Jephthah did to his daughter in performance of his vow. 1. Some think he only shut her up for a nun, and that it being unlawful, according to one part of his vow, (for they make it disjunctive) to offer her up for a burnt-offering, he thus, according to the other part engaged her to be *the Lord's*, i. e. totally to sequester herself from all the affairs of this life, and consequently from marriage, and to employ herself wholly in the acts of devotion all her days. That which countenanceth this opinion is, that she is *said to bewail her virginity, ver. 37, 38.* and that *she knew no man, ver. 39.* But if he sacrificed her, it was proper enough for her to bewail not her death, because that was intended to be for the honour of God, and she would undergo it cheerfully, but that unhappy circumstance of it, which made it more grievous to her than to another, because she was her father's only child, in whom he hoped his name and family would have been built up, that she was unmarried, and so left no issue to inherit her father's honour and estate; therefore that is it that is particularly taken notice of, *ver. 34.* that beside her he had neither son nor daughter. But that which makes me think Jephthah did not go about thus to satisfy his vow, or

or evade it rather, is, that we do not find any law, usage, or custom, in all the Old-Testament, which doth in the least intimate that a single life was any branch or article of religion, or that any person, man or woman, was looked upon as the more holy, more the Lord's, or devoted to him for living unmarried: it was no part of the law, either of the priests, or of the Nazarites, Deborah and Huldah, both prophetesses, and both of them particularly taken notice of to be married women. Besides, had she only been confined to a single life, she needed not to have desired these two months to bewail it in, she had had her whole life before her to do that, if she saw cause. Nor needed she to take such dear leave of her companions; for they that are of that opinion understand what is said, *ver. 40.* of their coming to talk with her, as our margin reads it, four days in a year. Therefore, 2. It seems more probable that he offered her up for a sacrifice, according to the letter of his vow, misunderstanding that law, which spoke of persons devoted by the curse of God, as if it were to be applied to such as were devoted by mens vows, *Lev. xxvii. 29.* *None devoted shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death;* and wanting to be better informed of the power the law gave him in this case to redeem her. Abraham's attempt to offer up Isaac, perhaps encouraged him, and made him think, if God would not accept this sacrifice which he had vowed, he would send an angel to stay his hand, as he did Abraham's; if she came out designedly to be made a sacrifice, as who knows but she might, perhaps he thought that would make the case the plainer, *volenti non fit injuria.* He imagined, it may be, that where there was neither anger nor malice, there was no murder, and that his good intention would sanctify this bad action; and since he had made such a vow, he thought better kill his daughter than break his vow, and let providence bear the blame that brought her forth to meet him.

2. But supposing that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, the question is whether he did well. (1.) Some justify him in it, and think he did well, and as became one that preferred the honour of God, before that which was dearest to him in this world. He is mentioned among the eminent believers, who by faith did great things, *Heb. xi. 32.* And this was one of the great things he did, it was done deliberately, and upon two months consideration and consultation. He is never blamed for it by any inspired writer. Tho' it highly exalts the paternal authority, yet it cannot justify any in doing the like, he was an extraordinary person, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him,* many circumstances now unknown to us, might make this altogether extraordinary, and justify it, yet not so as that it might justify the like. Some learned men have made this sacrifice a figure of Christ the great sacrifice; he was of unspotted purity and innocency, as she a chaste virgin: he was devoted to death by his Father, and so made a curse, or an anathema, for us; he submitted himself, as she did, to his Father's will, *not as I will, but as thou wilt.* But, (2.) Most condemn Jephthah, he did ill to make so rash a vow, and worse to perform it. He could not be bound by his vow to that which God had forbidden by the letter of the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill.* God had forbidden human sacrifices, so that it was (saith Dr Lightfoot) in effect a sacrifice to Moloch. And, probably, the reason why it is left dubious by the inspired penman, whether he sacrificed her or no, was, that they who did afterwards offer their children, might not take any encouragement from this instance. Concerning this, and some other such passages in the sacred story, which learned men are in the dark, divided, and in doubt about, we need not much amuse ourselves; what is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have, 1. *Jephthah's rencounter with the Ephraimites, and the blood shed on that unhappy occasion,* *ver. 1—6.* And the conclusion of *Jephthah's life and government,* *ver. 7.* 2. *A short account of three other of the judges of Israel, Ibzan,* *ver. 8—10.* *Elnon,* *ver. 11, 12.* *Abdon,* *ver. 13—15.*

1. **A**ND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire. 2. And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. 3. And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: Wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day to fight against me? 4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim, among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. 5. And the Gileadites took the passages of

No. xviii.

Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art thou an Ephraimite?* If he said, *Nay:* 6. Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said, Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites, forty and two thousand. 7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years: then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Here is, 1. The unreasonable displeasure of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah, because he had not called them in to his assistance against the Ammonites, that they might have shared in the triumphs and spoils, *ver. 1.* Pride was at the bottom of the quarrel, only by that comes contention. Proud men think all the honours lost that go besides themselves, and then *who can stand before envy?* The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Gideon, *chap. viii. 1.* who was of Manasseh on their side Jordan, as Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side Jordan. Ephraim and Manasseh were nearer a-kin than any other of the tribes, being both the sons of Joseph, and yet they were more jealous one of another than any other of the tribes. Jacob having crossed hands, and given Ephraim the preference, looking as far forward as the kingdom of the ten tribes, which Ephraim was the head of, after the revolt from the house of David, that tribe, not content with that honour in the promise, was displeased if Manasseh had any honour done it in the mean time. It is pity that kindred and relation, which should be an inducement to love and peace, should be ever an occasion (as it often proves) of strife and discord. *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle.* The anger of the Ephraimites at Jephthah was, 1. Causeless and unjust. *Why didst thou not call us to go with thee?* For a good reason, because they were the men of Gilead that had made him their captain, not the men of Ephraim, so that he had no authority to call them. Had this attempt miscarried for want of their help, they might justly have blamed him for not desiring it. But when the work was done, and done effectually, the Ammonites subdued, and Israel delivered, there was no harm done, tho' their hands were not employed in it. 2. It was cruel and outrageous. They got together in a tumultuous manner, went over Jordan as far as Mizpeh in Gilead, where Jephthah lived, and no less will satisfy their fury, but they will burn his house, and him in it. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.* Those resentments that have the least reason for them, have commonly the most rage in them. Jephthah was now a conqueror over the common enemies of Israel, and they should have come to congratulate him, and return him the thanks of their tribe for the good services he had done, but we must not think it strange if we receive ill from those, from whom we deserve well. Jephthah was now a mourner for the calamity of his family, upon his daughter's account, and they should have come to condole and comfort him, but barbarous men take a pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted. In this world the end of one trouble often proves the beginning of another; nor must we ever *boast as tho' we had put off the harness.*

2. Jephthah's warm vindication of himself. He did not endeavour to pacify them, as Gideon had done in the like case; the Ephraimites were now more outrageous than they were then, and Jephthah had not so much of a meek and quiet spirit as Gideon had. Whether they would be pacified or no, Jephthah takes care,

1. To justify himself, *ver. 2, 3.* He makes it out that they had no cause at all to quarrel with him, for, (1.) It was not in pursuit of glory that he had engaged in this war, but for the necessary defence of his country, with which the children of Ammon greatly strove. (2.) He had invited the Ephraimites to come and join with him, tho' he neither needed them, nor was under any obligation to pay that respect to them, but they had declined the service, *I called you, and ye delivered me not out of their hands.* Had that been true which they charged him with, yet it had not been a just ground of quarrel, but it seems it was false; and, as the matter of fact now appears, he had more cause to quarrel with them, for deserting the common interests of Israel in a time of need. It is no new thing for those who are themselves most culpable, to be most clamorous in accusing the innocent. (3.) The enterprize was very hazardous, and they had more reason to pity him, than to be angry with him, *I put my life in my hands,* i. e. exposed myself to the utmost peril in what I did, having so small an army. The honour they envied was bought dear enough, they needed not grudge it him; few of them would have ventured so far for it. (4.) He doth not take the glory of the success to himself, that had been invidious, but gives it all to God, *the Lord delivered them into mine hand.* If God was pleased so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended at that? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is not that in effect to fight against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument.

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2. When this just answer (tho' not so soft an answer as Gideon's) did not prevail to turn away their wrath, he took care, both to defend himself from their fury, and to chastise their insolence with the sword, by virtue of his authority as Israel's Judge. (1.) The Ephraimites had not only quarrelled with Jephthah, but when his neighbours and friends appeared to take his part, they had abused them, and given them foul language; for I adhere to our translation, and so take it, *ver. 4.* They said in scorn, ye Gileadites that dwell here on the other side Jordan, are but fugitives of Ephraim, the scum and dregs of the tribe of Joseph, of which Ephraim is the chief, the refuse of the family, and are so accounted among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. Who cares for you? All your neighbours know what you are, no better than fugitives and vagabonds, separated from your brethren, and driven hither into a corner. The Gileadites were as true Israelites as any other, and at this time had signalized themselves, both in the choice of Jephthah, and in the war with Ammon above all the families of Israel, and yet are most basely and unjustly called fugitives. It is an ill thing to fasten names or characters of reproach upon persons or countries, as is common, especially upon those that lie under outward disadvantages: it oft occasions quarrels that prove of ill consequence, as it did here. See likewise what a mischievous thing an abusive tongue is, that calls ill names, and gives scurrilous language, it *sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell*, (Jam. iii. 6.) and many a time cuts the throat of him that useth it, as it did here, *Psal. lxxiv. 8.* If these Ephraimites could have denied themselves the poor satisfaction of calling the Gileadites fugitives, they might have prevented a great deal of bloodshed, for *grievous words stir up anger*, and who knows how great a matter a little of that fire may kindle? (2.) This affront raiseth the Gileadites blood, and the indignity done to themselves, as well as to their captain, must be revenged. 1. They routed them in the field, *ver. 4.* They fought with Ephraim, and being but a rude unheaded rabble, smote Ephraim, and put them to flight. 2. They cut off their retreat, and so completed their revenge, *ver. 5, 6.* The Gileadites, who perhaps were better acquainted with the passages of Jordan than the Ephraimites were, secured them with strong guards, who were ordered to slay every Ephraimite that offered to pass the river. Here was, (1.) Cruelty enough in the destruction of them. Sufficient surely was *the punishment which was inflicted by many*, when they were routed in the field; there needed not this severity to cut off all that escaped. Shall the sword devour for ever? Whether Jephthah is to be praised for this, I know not, perhaps he saw it to be a piece of necessary justice. (2.) Cunning enough in the discovery of them. It seems the Ephraimites, tho' they speak the same language with other Israelites, yet had got a custom in the dialect of their country to pronounce the Hebrew letter *Shin* like *Samech*, and they had so strongly used themselves to it, that they could not do otherwise, no not to save their lives. We learn to speak by imitation, they that first used *s* for *sh*, did it either because it was shorter, or because it was finer, and their children learned to speak like them; so that you might know an Ephraimite by it; as in England we know a west-country man, or a north-country man, nay, perhaps a Shropshire man, and a Cheshire man by his pronunciation. *Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrays thee.* By this the Ephraimites were discovered. If they took a man that they suspected to be an Ephraimite, but he denied it, they bid him say Shibboleth, but either he could not, as our translation reads it, or he did not heed, or frame, or direct himself, as some read, to pronounce it right, but said Sibboleth, and so was known to be an Ephraimite, and was slain immediately. Shibboleth, signifies a river or stream, ask leave to go over Shibboleth, the river. Those that were thus cut off, made up the whole number of slaughtered Ephraimites forty two thousand, (*ver. 6.*) Thus another mutiny of that angry tribe was prevented.

Now let us observe the righteousness of God in the punishment of these proud and passionate Ephraimites, which in several instances answered their sin. (1.) They were proud of the honour of their tribe, gloried in this that they were Ephraimites, but how soon are they brought to be ashamed or afraid to own their country. *Art thou an Ephraimite?* No, now rather of any tribe than that. (2.) They had gone in a rage over Jordan to burn Jephthah's house with fire, but now they come back to Jordan as sneakingly, as they had passed it furiously, and were cut off from ever returning to their own houses. (3.) They had upbraided the Gileadites with the infelicity of their country, lying at such a distance, and now they suffer by an infirmity peculiar to their own country, in not being able to pronounce Shibboleth. (4.) They had called the Gileadites, unjustly, fugitives, and now they are really and in good earnest become fugitives themselves; and in the Hebrew, it is the same word, *ver. 5.* that is used of the Ephraimites that escaped, or that fled, which they had used in scorn of the Gileadites, calling them fugitives, he that rolleth the stone, or reproach, unjustly upon another, let him expect that it will justly return upon himself.

Lastly, Here is the end of Jephthah's government. He judged Israel but six years, and then died, *ver. 7.* Perhaps the death of his daughter sunk him so, that he never looked up after, but it shortened his days, and he went to his grave mourning.

8. ¶ And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel. 9. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, *whom* he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. 10. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem. 11. ¶ And after him, Elon a Zebulonite judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years. 12. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun. 13. ¶ And after him, Abdon the son of Hillel a Pirathonite judged Israel. 14. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass-colts: and he judged Israel eight years. 15. And Abdon the son of Hillel, the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

We have here a short account of the short reigns of three more of the judges of Israel; the first of which governed but seven years, the second ten, and the third eight. *For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof*, many in a short time, successively, *Prov. xxviii. 2.* Good men being removed in the beginning of their usefulness, and by that time they had applied themselves to their business.

1. Ibzan of Bethlehem, most probably Bethlehem of Judah, David's city, not that in Zebulun, which is only mentioned once, *Josh. xix. 15.* He ruled but seven years, but by the number of his children, and his disposing of them all in marriage himself, it appears that he lived long; and probably the great increase of his family, and the numerous alliances he made, added to his personal merits, made him the more fit to be either chosen by the people, as Jephthah was, or called of God immediately, as Gideon was, to be Israel's judge, to keep up and carry on the work of God among them. That which is remarkable concerning him, is his children. (1.) That he had many children, sixty in all, a quiver full of these arrows. Thus was Bethlehem of old, famous for increase, the very city where he was to be born, whose spiritual seed should be *as the stars of heaven*. (2.) That he had an equal number of each sex, thirty sons and thirty daughters, a thing which doth not often happen in the same family, yet in the great family of mankind, he that at first made two, male and female, by his wife providence, preserves a succession of both in some sort of equality, as far as is requisite to the keeping up of the generations of men upon earth. (3.) That he took care to marry them all; his daughters he sent abroad, *& maritis dedit*, so the vulgar Latin adds, *he provided husbands for them*, and as it were in exchange, and both ways strengthening his interest, he *took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons*. The Jews say, every father owes three things to his son, to teach him to read the law; learn him a trade; and get him a wife. What a difference was there between Ibzan's family, and his immediate predecessor's, Jephthah's! Ibzan has sixty children and all married, Jephthah but one, a daughter, that dies or lives unmarried. Some are increased, others are diminished, both are the Lord's doing.

2. Elon of Zebulun, in the north of Canaan, was next raised up to preside in publick affairs, to administer justice, and reform abuses; ten years he continued a blessing to Israel, and then died, *ver. 11, 12.* Dr Lightfoot computes, that in the beginning of his time, the forty years oppression by the Philistines began, spoken of *chap. xiii. 1.* and about that time Samson was born. Probably his residence being in the north, the Philistines who bordered upon the southern parts of Canaan, took the opportunity of making incursions upon them.

3. Abdon, of the tribe of Ephraim, succeeded, and in him that illustrious tribe begins to recover its reputation, having not afforded any person of note since Joshua; for Abimelech the Shechemite was rather a scandal to it. This Abdon was famous for the multitude of his off-spring, *ver. 14.* he had forty sons, and thirty grand-sons, all which he lived to see grown up, and they rode on seventy ass-colts, either as judges and officers, or as gentlemen, and persons of distinction. It was a satisfaction to him, thus to see his children's children, but it was feared he did not see peace upon Israel, for by this time the Philistines had begun to break in upon them.

Concerning this, and the rest of these judges that have never so short an account given of them, yet notice is taken where they were buried, *ver. 7, 10, 12, 15.* perhaps, because the inscriptions upon their monuments (for such were anciently used, *2 Kings xxiii. 17.*) would serve for the confirmation and enlargement of their story, and might be consulted by such as desired further information concerning them, St Peter having occasion to speak of David, saith, *his sepulchre is with us unto this day*, Acts ii. 29. Or it is intended for the honour of the places where they laid their bones; but may be improved for the lessening of our esteem of all worldly glory, which death and the grave will stain the pride of. These judges that were as gods to Israel, died like men, and all their honour was laid in the dust.

It is very strange, that in the history of all these judges, some of whose actions are very particularly related, there is not so much as once mention of the high-priest, or any other priest or Levite, appearing either for counsel or action in any publick affair, from Phinehas, *Judg.* xx. 28. to Eli; which may well be computed two hundred and fifty years, only the names of the high-priests at that time are preserved, *1 Chron.* vi. 4—7. and *Ezra* vii. 3, 4, 5. How can this strange obscurity of that priesthood for so long a time, now in the beginning of its days, agree with that mighty splendor with which it was introduced, and the figure which the institution of it makes in the law of Moses? Surely it intimates, that the institution was chiefly intended to be typical, and that the mighty benefits that seemed to be promised by it were to be chiefly looked for in its antitype, the everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus, in comparison of the excelling glory of which that priesthood had no glory, *2 Cor.* iii. 10.

C H A P. XIII.

At this chapter begins the story of Samson, the last of the judges of Israel, whose story is recorded in this book, and next before Eli. The passages related concerning him, are from first to last very surprising and uncommon. The figure he makes in this history is really great, and yet vastly different from that of his predecessors: We never find him at the head, either of a court or of an army, never upon the throne of judgment, or in the field of battle, yet in his own proper person, a great patriot of his country, and a terrible scourge and check to its enemies and oppressors; he was an eminent believer, Heb. xi. 32. and a glorious type of him, who with his own arm wrought salvation. The history of the rest of the judges commenceth from their advancement to that station, but Samson's begins with his birth, nay, with his conception, and no less than an angel from Heaven ushers him into the world, as a pattern of what should be afterwards done to John Baptist, and Christ. This is related in this chapter. 1. The occasion of raising up this deliverer was the oppression of Israel by the Philistines, ver. 2. 2. His birth is foretold by an angel to his mother, ver. 2—5. 3. She relates it to his father, ver. 6, 7. 4. They both together have it again from the angel, ver. 8—14. whom they treat with respect, ver. 15—18. and who, to their great amazement, discovers what he was at parting, ver. 19—23. 5. Samson is born, ver. 24, 25.

1. **A**ND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2. ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and bare not. 3. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. 4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. 5. For lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. 6. ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name. 7. But he said unto me, Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a son; and now drink no wine, nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God, from the womb to the day of his death.

The first verse gives us a short account, such as we have too often met with already, of the great distress that Israel was in, which gave occasion for the raising up of a deliverer. They did evil, as they had done, in the sight of the Lord, and then God delivered them, as he had done, into the hands of their enemies. If there had been no sin, there had needed no Saviour; but sin was suffered to abound, that grace might much more abound. The enemies God now sold them to were the Philistines, their next neighbours, that lay within them, the first and chief of the nations, which were devoted to destruction, but which God left to prove them, *Judg.* iii. 1, 3. The five lords of the Philistines, an inconsiderable people, in comparison with Israel, they had but five cities of any note, and yet when God made use of them as the staff in his hand, they were very oppressive and vexatious. And this trouble lasted longer than any yet, it continued forty years, tho' probably not always alike violent.

When Israel was in this distress, Samson was born; and here we have his birth foretold by an angel. Observe,

1. His extraction. He was of the tribe of Dan, *ver.* 2. Dan signifies a judge, or judgment, *Gen.* xxx. 6. and probably it was with an eye to Samson, that dying Jacob foretold, Dan shall judge his people, i. e. he shall produce a judge for his people, though one of the sons of the handmaids, as one, as well as any one, of the tribes of Israel, *Gen.* xlix. 16. The lot of the tribe of Dan lay next to the country of the Philistines, and therefore one of that tribe was most fit to be made a bridle upon them. His parents had been long childless. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been kept a great while in the want of the blessing of children; as Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, and John Baptist; that the mercy might be the more acceptable when it did come. *Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear, Isa.* liv. 1. Note, Mercies long waited for, often prove signal mercies, and it is made to appear that they were worth waiting for, and by them others may be encouraged to continue their hope in God's mercy.

2. The glad tidings brought to his mother, that she should have a son. The messenger was an angel of the Lord, *ver.* 3. yet appearing as a man, with the aspect and garb of a prophet, or man of God. And this angel (as the learned bishop Patrick supposeth on *ver.* 18.) was the Lord himself, that is, the Word of the Lord, who was to be the Messiah, for his name is called Wonderful, *ver.* 18. and Jehovah, *ver.* 19. The great Redeemer, did in a particular manner concern himself about this typical Redeemer. It was not so much for the sake of Manoah and his wife, obscure Danites, that this extraordinary message was sent, but for Israel's sake whose deliverer he was to be, and not only so, his services to Israel not seeming to answer the grandeur of his entry, but for the Messiah's sake, whose type he was to be, and whose birth must be foretold by an angel as his was.

The angel in the message he delivers, (1.) Takes notice of her affliction, *behold now thou art barren and bearest not.* From hence she might gather he was a prophet, that tho' a stranger to her, and one she had never seen before, yet he knew this to be her grievance. He tells her of it, not to upbraid her with it, but because, perhaps at this time she was actually thinking of this affliction, and bemoaning her self, as one written childless. God often sends in comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel most from their troubles. Now thou art barren, but thou shalt not be always so, as she feared, nor long so. (2.) He assures her that she should conceive and bear a son, *ver.* 3. and repeats it, *ver.* 5. to shew the power of a divine word, the strongest man that ever was, was a child of promise, as Isaac, born by force and virtue of a promise, and faith in that promise, *Heb.* xi. 11. *Gal.* iv. 23. Many a woman, after having been long barren, has born a son by providence, but Samson was by promise, because a figure of the promised seed, so long expected by the faith of the Old Testament saints. (3.) He appoints that the child should be a Nazarite from his birth, and therefore that the mother should be subject to the law of the Nazarites (tho' not under the vow of a Nazarite) and should drink no wine or strong drink, so long as this child was to have his nourishment from her, either in the womb, or at the breast, *ver.* 4, 5. Observe, This deliverer of Israel must be in the strictest manner devoted to God, and an example of holiness. It is spoken of as a kindness to the people, that God raised up of their young men for Nazarites, *Amos* ii. 11. Other judges had corrected their apostasies from God, but Samson must appear as one, more than any of them, consecrated to God; and notwithstanding what we read of his faults, we have reason to think, that being a Nazarite of God's making, he did in the course of his conversation, exemplify, not only the ceremony, but the substance of that separation to the Lord, in which the Nazariteship did consist, *Numb.* vi. 2. Those that would save others, must by singular piety distinguish themselves. Samuel, who carried on Israel's deliverance from the Philistines, was a Nazarite by his mother's vow, *1 Sam.* i. 11. as Samson by the divine appointment. The mother of this deliverer must therefore deny her self, and not eat any unclean thing; what was lawful at another time was now to be forborn. As the promise tried her faith, so this precept tried her obedience, for God requires both from those on whom he will bestow his favours. Women with child ought conscientiously to avoid whatever they have reason to think will be any way prejudicial to the health, or good constitution of the fruit of their body. And perhaps Samson's mother was to refrain from wine and strong drink, not only because he was designed for a Nazarite, but because he was designed for a man of great strength, which his mother's temperance would contribute to. (4.) He foretels the service which this child should do to his country, *he shall begin to deliver Israel.* Note, It is very desirable that our children may be not only devoted entirely to God themselves, but instrumental for the good of others, and the service of their generation. Not recluses, candles under a bushel, but on a candlestick. Observe, *He shall begin to deliver Israel.* This intimated, that the oppression of the Philistines should last long, for Israel's deliverance from it should not so much as begin, not one step be taken towards it, till this child, which was now unborn, should be grown up to a capacity of beginning it. And yet he must not compleat the deliverance neither, he shall only begin to deliver Israel, which intimates that the trouble should still be prolonged, God chooseth to carry on his work gradually, and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the top-stone.

Now

Now herein Samson was a type of Christ, (1.) As a Nazarite to God, a Nazarite from the womb. For tho' our Lord Jesus was not a Nazarite himself, yet he was typified by the Nazarites; as being perfectly pure from all sin, not so much as conceived in it, and entirely devoted to his Father's honour. Of the Jewish church, *as concerning the flesh Christ came*, because to them pertained the promise of him, *Rom. ix. 4, 5.* By virtue of that promise he long lay as it were in the womb of that church, which for many ages was pregnant of him, and therefore, like Samson's mother, during that pregnancy, was made a holy nation, and a peculiar people, and strictly forbidden to *touch any unclean thing for her sake*, who in the fulness of time was to come from them. (2.) As a deliverer of Israel; for he is Jesus a Saviour, who saves his people from their sins: But with this difference, Samson did only begin to deliver Israel, David was afterwards raised up to compleat the destruction of the Philistines. But our Lord Jesus is both Samson and David too; both the *author and finisher of our faith.*

3. The report which Manoah's wife in a transport of joy brings in all haste to her husband, of this surprizing message, *ver. 6, 7.* The glad tidings were brought her when she was alone, perhaps religiously employed in meditation or prayer; but she could not, she would not, conceal it from her husband, but gives him an account,

1. Of the messenger. It was a man of God, *ver. 6.* His countenance she could describe, it was very awful, he had such a majesty in his looks, such a sparkling eye, such a shining face, so powerfully commanding reverence and respect, that according to the idea she had of an angel, he had the very countenance of one. But his name she can give no account of, nor to what tribe or city of Israel he belonged, for he did not think fit to tell her, and for her part the very sight of him struck such an awe upon her, that she durst not ask him. She was abundantly satisfied, that he was a servant of God, his person and message she thought carried their own evidence along with them, and she enquired no further.

2. Of the message. She gives him a particular account both of the promise, and of the precept, *ver. 7.* that he also might believe the promise, and might on all occasions be a monitor to her to observe the precept. Thus should yoke-fellows communicate to each other their experiences of communion with God, and their improvements in acquaintance with him, that they may be helpful to each other in *the way that is called holy.*

8. ¶ Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send, come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. 11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? 13. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware. 14. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her, let her observe.

We have here an account of a second visit, which the angel of God made to Manoah and his wife.

1. Manoah earnestly prayed for it, *ver. 8.* He was not incredulous of the story his wife told him, he knew she was a virtuous woman, and therefore the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, he knew she would not go about to impose upon him, much less was he, as Josephus unworthily represents him, jealous of his wife's conversation with this stranger; but (1.) He takes it for granted, that this child of promise should in due time be given them; and speaks without hesitation of *the child that shall be born.* There was *not found so great faith*, no not in Zechariah, a priest, then in waiting at the altar of the Lord, and to whom the angel himself appeared, as was in this honest Danite. Things hid from the wife and prudent that value themselves upon the niceness of their enquiries, are oft revealed unto babes, who know how to praise God's gifts, and to take gifts and to take God's word. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet, as Manoah here, have believed.* (2.) All his care is, *What they should do to the child that should be born.* Note, Good men are more solicitous and desirous to know the duty that is to be done by them, than to know the events that shall be concerning them; for duty is our's, events are God's. Solomon enquires concerning what the good men should do, not the good they should have, *Ecc. ii. 3.* (3.) He therefore prays to

God to send the same blessed messenger again to give them further instructions concerning the management of this Nazarite, fearing lest his wife's joy for the promise might have made her forget some part of the precept, in which he was desirous to be fully informed, and lie under no mistake. *Lord, let the man of God come again unto us*, for we desire to be better acquainted with him. Note, Those that have heard from heaven, cannot but wish to hear more from thence, again and again to meet with the man of God. Observe, He doth not go, or send his servants abroad to find out this man of God, but seeks him upon his knees, prays to God to send him, and thus seeking finds him. Would we have God's messengers, the ministers of his gospel, to bring a word proper for us, and for our instruction, *intreat the Lord* to send them to us, to teach us, *Rom. xv. 30, 32.*

2. God graciously granted it, *ver. 9.* God hearkened to the voice of Manoah. Note, God will not fail some way or other to guide those by his counsel, that are sincerely desirous to know their duty, and apply themselves to him to teach them, *Psal. xxv. 8, 9.*

1. The angel appears this second time also to the wife; when she was sitting alone, probably tending the flocks, or otherwise well employed in the field where she was retired, solitude is oft a good opportunity of communion with God; good people have thought themselves never less alone, than when alone, if God be with them.

2. She goes in all haste to call her husband, doubtless humbly beseeching the stay of this blessed messenger, till she returns, and her husband with her, *ver. 10, 11.* She did not desire him to go with her to her husband, but will fetch her husband to him; Those that would meet with God must attend there where he is pleased to manifest himself. Oh, faith she overjoyed, my dear love, thy prayers are answered, yonder is the man of God come to make us another visit. He that came the other day; or, as some read it, this day, for *other* is not in the original, and it is probable enough that both these visits were the same day, and at the same place, and that the second time she sat expecting him. The man of God is very willing she should call her husband, *John iv. 16.* Those that have got acquaintance with the things of God themselves, should invite others to the same acquaintance, *John i. 45, 46.* Manoah is not disgusted that the angel did not this second time appear to him, but very willingly goes after his wife to the man of God. To atone (as it were) for the first fatal miscarriage, when Eve earnestly pressed Adam to that which was evil, and he too easily yielded to her, let yoke-fellows excite one another to love and good-works; and if the wife will lead, let not the husband think it any disparagement to him, to follow her in that which is virtuous and praise-worthy.

3. Manoah being come to the angel, and satisfied by him that he was the same that had appeared to his wife, doth, with all humility, 1. Welcome the promise, *ver. 12.* *Now let thy words come to pass*, this was not only the language of his desire, but of his faith, like that of the Blessed Virgin, *Luke i. 38.* *Be it according to thy word.* Lord, I lay hold on what thou hast said, and depend upon it, *let it come to pass.* 2. Beg that the prescriptions given might be repeated, *How shall we order the child?* The directions were given to his wife, but he looks upon himself as concerned to assist her in the careful management of this promised seed, according to order, for the utmost care of both the parents, and their constant joint endeavour, is little enough to be engaged for the good ordering of children that are devoted to God, and to be brought up for him. Let not one devolve it on the other, but both do their best. Observe from Manoah's enquiry, 1. In general, That when God is pleased to bestow any mercy upon us, our great care must be how to use it well, and as we ought, because it is then only a mercy indeed, when it is rightly managed. God has given us bodies, souls, estates, how shall we order them, that we may answer the intent of the donor, and give a good account of them. 2. In particular, those to whom God hath given children must be very careful how they order them, and what they do unto them, that they may drive out the foolishness that is *bound up in their hearts*, from their minds and manners well betimes, and *train them in the way wherein they should go.* Herein pious parents will beg divine assistance. Lord, teach us how we may order our children, that they may be Nazarites, and living sacrifices to thee.

4. The angel repeats the directions he had before given, *ver. 13, 14.* *Of all that I forbade let her beware.* And *all that I commanded her let her observe.* Note, There is need of a great deal both of caution, and observation, for the right ordering both of our selves and of our children. Beware and observe; take heed not only of drinking wine or strong drink, but of *eating any thing that cometh of the vine.* Those that would preserve themselves pure, must keep at a distance from that which borders upon sin, or leads to it. When she was with child of a Nazarite, she must not eat *any unclean thing*; so those in whom Christ is formed must carefully cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and do nothing to the prejudice of that new man.

15. ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. 16. And the angel of the LORD

LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread : and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD : for Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD. 17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour? 18. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? 19. So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD : and the angel did wonderfully, and Manoah and his wife looked on. 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar : and Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. 21. (But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife) Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD. 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. 23. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

We have here an account,

1. Of what further passed between Manoah and the angel at this interview. It was in kindness to him that while the angel was with him, it was concealed from him that it was an angel, for had he known it, it would have been such a terror to him, that he durst not have conversed with him as he did, *ver. 16. He knew not that he was an angel.* So Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.* We could not bear the sight of the divine glory unveiled. God having determined to speak to us by men like our selves, prophets and ministers, even when he spake by his angels, or by his Son, they appeared in the likeness of men, and were taken but for men of God.

Now, 1. The angel declined to accept his treat, and appointed him to turn it into a sacrifice. Manoah being desirous to shew some token of respect and gratitude to this venerable stranger, who had brought them these glad tidings, begged he would take a short supper with him, *ver. 15. we will soon make ready a kid for thee.* They that welcome the message, will be kind to the messengers, for his sake that sends them, *1 Thes. v. 13.* But the angel told him, *ver. 16. he would not eat of his bread,* no more than he would of Gideon's, but as there directed him to offer it to God, *chap. vi. 20, 21.* Angels need not meat or drink, but the glorifying of God is their meat and drink, and it was Christ's, *John iv. 34.* And we in some measure do the will of God as they do it, if tho' we cannot live without meat and drink, yet we eat and drink to the glory of God, and so turn even our common meals into sacrifices.

2. The angel declined telling him his name, and would not so far gratify his curiosity. Manoah desired to know his name, *ver. 17.* and of what tribe he was, not as if he doubted the truth of his message, but that they might return his visit, and be better acquainted with him. It is good to increase and improve our acquaintance with good men, and good ministers : and he has a further design, that when *thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour*, celebrate thee as a true prophet, and recommend others to thee for divine instructions ; that we may call the child that shall be born after thy name, and so do thee honour ; or that we may send thee a present, honouring one whom God has honoured. But the angel denies his request with something of a check to his curiosity, *ver. 18. why askest thou after my name?* Jacob himself could not prevail for this favour, *Gen. xxxii. 29.* Note, We have not what to ask, when we ask we know not what. Manoah's request was honestly meant, and yet was denied, God told Moses his name, *Exod. iii. 13, 14.* because there was particular occasion for his knowing it, but here there was no occasion. What Manoah asked for instruction in his duty, he was readily told, *ver. 12, 13.* but what he asked to gratify his curiosity was denied ; God has in his word given us full directions concerning our duty, but designed not to answer all the enquiries of a speculative head. He gives him a reason for his refusal, it is secret. The names of angels were not as yet revealed, to prevent the idolizing of them ; after the captivity, when the church was cured of idolatry, angels made themselves known to Daniel by their names, Michael and Gabriel ; and to Zacharias, the angel told his name unasked, *Luke i. 19. I am Gabriel.* But here it is secret, or, it is wonderful, too wonderful for us. One of Christ's names, is *wonderful*, *Isa. ix. 6.* His name was long a secret, but by the gospel it is brought to light, *Jesus a Saviour.* Manoah must not ask, because he must not know. Note, There are secret things which belong not to us, and which we must content our selves to be in the dark about, while we are here in this world. (2.) We must therefore never

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indulge a vain curiosity in our enquiries concerning these things, *Col. ii. 18. Nescire velle quæ magister maximus docere non vult, eruditi inscitia est.*

3. The angel assisted and owned their sacrifice, and at parting gave them to understand who he was. He had directed them to offer their burnt-offering to the Lord, *ver. 16.* Praises offered up to God are the most acceptable entertainment of the angels ; see *Rev. xxii. 9. worship God.* And Manoah, having so good a warrant, tho' he was no priest, and had no altar, turned his meat into a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock to the Lord, (*ver. 19.*) *i. e.* he brought and laid it to be offered, Lord, here it is, do what thou pleasest with it. Thus must we bring our hearts to God as living sacrifices, and submit them to the operation of his Spirit. All things being now ready, 1. *The angel did wondrously*, for his name was *wonderful*. Probably, the wonder he did was the same with what he had done for Gideon, he made fire to come either down from heaven, or up out of the rock to consume the sacrifice. 2. He ascended up towards heaven *in the flame of the sacrifice*, *ver. 20.* By this it appeared, that he was not, as they thought, a meer man, but a messenger immediately from heaven, thence certainly he descended, for thither he ascended, *John iii. 13.—vi. 62.* This signified God's acceptance of the offering, and intimates to what we owe the acceptance of all our offerings, even to the mediation of the angel of the covenant, that other angel who puts *much incense to the prayers of saints*, and so offers them before the throne, *Rev. viii. 3.* Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But it is Christ in the heart by faith that makes it an offering of a sweet smelling savour : without him our services are offensive smoke, but in him acceptable flame. We may apply it to Christ's sacrifice of himself for us ; he ascended in the flame of his own offering, for *by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place*, *Heb. ix. 12.* While the angel did this, it is twice said, *ver. 19. and 20. that Manoah and his wife looked on.* This is a proof of the miracle, the matter of fact was true, for out of the mouth of these two eye-witnesses, the report of it is established. The angel did all that was done in the sacrifice, they did but look on ; yet doubtless when the angel ascended towards heaven, their hearts ascended with him in thanksgiving for the promise which came from thence, and in expectation of the performance to come from thence too. Yet when the angel is ascended, they dare not as those that were the witnesses of Christ's ascension, stand gazing up into heaven, but in holy fear and reverence, they fell on their faces to the ground. And now, (1.) They knew that it was an angel, *ver. 21.* It was plain it was not the body of a man they saw, since it was not chained to the earth, nor prejudiced by fire ; but ascended, and ascended in flame ; and therefore with good reason concludes it was an angel, for he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. (2.) But he did not any more appear to them ; it was for a particular occasion now over, that he was sent, not to settle a constant correspondence, as with prophets. They must remember and observe what the angel had said, and not expect to hear more.

2. We have an account of the impressions which this vision made upon Manoah and his wife. While the angel did wondrously they looked on, and said nothing. So it becomes us carefully to observe the wondrous works of God, and to be silent before him ; but when he was gone, having finished his work, had time to make their reflections.

1. In Manoah's reflection upon it, there is great fear, *ver. 22.* He had spoken with great assurance of the son they should shortly be the joyful parents of, *ver. 8, 12.* and yet is now put into such a confusion by that very thing, which should have strengthened and encouraged his faith, that he counts upon nothing, but their being both cut off immediately, *we shall surely die.* It was a vulgar opinion generally received among the ancient Jews, that it was present death to see God, or an angel ; and this notion quite overcame his faith for the present, as it did Gideon's, *chap. vi. 22.*

2. In his wife's reflection upon it, there is great faith, *ver. 23.* Here the weaker vessel was the stronger believer, which perhaps was the reason why the angel chose once and again, to appear to her. Manoah's heart began to fail him, but his wife as a helpmeet for him encouraged him. Two are better than one, for if one fall into dejections and despondencies, the other will help to raise him up. Yoke-fellows should piously assist each others faith and joy, as there is occasion. None could argue better than Manoah's wife doth here ; *we shall surely die*, faith her husband ; nay, faith she, we need not fear that : let us never turn that against us, which is really for us. We shall not die unless God be pleased to kill us, our death must come from his hand, and his pleasure ; now the tokens of his favour which we have received, forbid us to think that he designs our destruction. Had he thought fit to kill us, (1.) He would not have accepted our sacrifice, and signified to us his acceptance of it, by turning it to ashes, *Psal. xx. 3. marg.* The sacrifice was the ransom of our lives, and the fire fastning upon that, was a plain indication of the turning away of his wrath from us. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but you see ours is not so. (2.) He would not have shewed us all these things, these strange sights, now at a time, when there is little or no open vision, *1 Sam. iii. 1.* nor would he have given these exceeding great and precious promises of a son, that shall be a Nazarite, and a deliverer of Israel, he would not have

told us such things as these, if he had been pleased to kill us. We need not fear the withering of those roots, out of which such a branch is yet to spring. Note, Hereby it appears God designs not the death of sinners, that he has accepted the great sacrifice which Christ offered up for their salvation, and has put them in a way of obtaining his favour, and assured them of it, upon their repentance. Had he been pleased to kill them, he would not have done so. And let those good Christians, who have had communion with God in the word and prayer, to whom he has graciously manifested himself, and who have had reason to think God has accepted their works, take encouragement from thence in a cloudy and dark day; God would not have done what he has done for my soul, if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last, for his work is perfect; nor will he mock his people with his favours. Learn to reason as Manoah's wife did, if God had designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not have given me such distinguishing tokens of his favour, *O woman, great is thy faith.*

24 ¶ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. 25. And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Here is, 1. Samson's birth. The woman that had been long barren bare a son, according to the promise, for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good! His name Samson comes from Shemesh, the sun, turned into a diminutive, *sol exiguus*, the sun in miniature; perhaps because being born like Moses, to be a deliverer, he was, like him, exceeding fair, his face shone like a little sun: or in remembrance of the shining countenance of that man of God, who brought them the notice of him; tho' they knew not his name, yet thus now his sayings were come to pass, they did him honour. A little sun, because a Nazarite born, and the Nazarites were as *rubies* and *sapphires*, Lam. iv. 7. And because of his great strength; the sun is compared to a *strong man*, Psal. xix. 5. why should not a strong man then be compared to the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. A little sun, because the glory of, and a light to, his people Israel. A type of Christ, the sun of righteousness.

2. His childhood. He grew more than ordinary in strength and stature, far out-grew other children of his age, and not in that only, but in other instances, it appeared that the Lord blessed him, qualified him both in body and mind, for something great and extraordinary. Children of promise shall have the blessing.

3. His youth. When he grew up a little, *the Spirit of the Lord began to move him*, ver. 25. This was an evidence that the Lord blessed him: Where God gives his blessing, he gives his Spirit to qualify for the blessing. Those are blessed indeed, in whom the spirit of grace begins to work betimes, in the days of their childhood. If the *Spirit be poured out, upon our offspring*, they will spring up *as willows by the water courses*, Isa. xlv. 3, 4. The Spirit of God moved Samson in the camp of Dan, *i. e.* in the general muster of the trained-bands of that tribe, who probably had formed a camp between Zorah and Eshtaol, near the place he lived, to oppose the incursions of the Philistines, there Samson, when a child, appeared among them, and signalized himself by some very brave actions, excelling them all in manly exercises and trials of strength: and probably he shewed himself more than ordinarily zealous against the enemies of his country, and discovered more of a public spirit, than could be expected in a child. The spirit moved at times, not at all times, but as the wind blows, when he listeth, to shew that what he did was not from himself, then he could have done it any time. Strong men think themselves greatly animated by wine, Psal. lxxviii. 65. but Samson drank no wine, and yet excelled in strength and courage, and every thing that was bold and brave, for he had the Spirit of God moving him; therefore *be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*, who will come to those that are sober and temperate.

C H A P. XIV.

The idea which this chapter gives us of Samson, is not what one might have expected concerning one, who by the special designation of heaven, was a Nazarite to God, and a deliverer of Israel, and yet really he was both. Here is, 1. Samson's courtship of a daughter of the Philistines, and his marriage to her, ver. 1—5, 7, 8. 2. His conquest of a lion, and the prize he found in the carcase of it, ver. 5, 6, 8, 9. 3. Samson's riddle proposed to his companions, ver. 10—14. and unriddled by the treachery of his wife, ver. 15—18. 4. The occasion this gave him to kill thirty of the Philistines, ver. 19. and to break off his new alliance, ver. 20.

1. **A**ND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. 2. And he came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in

Timnath, of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?* And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well. 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and behold, a young lion roared against him. 6. And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. 7. And he went down, and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. 8. ¶ And after a time, he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and behold, *there was* a swarm of bees, and honey in the carcase of the lion. 9. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

Here, 1. Samson under the extraordinary conduct of providence, seeks an occasion of quarrelling with the Philistines, by joining in affinity with them. A strange method, but the truth is, Samson was himself a riddle, a paradox of a man, did that which was really great and good, by that which was seemingly weak and evil, because he was designed not to be a pattern to us, who must walk by rule, not by example, but a type of him, who tho' he knew no sin, was made sin before us, and appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that he might condemn and destroy sin in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3.

1. As the negotiation of Samson's marriage was a common case, we may observe. (1.) That it was weakly and foolishly done of him to set his affections upon a daughter of the Philistines, the thing appeared very ill. Shall one that is not only an Israelite, but a Nazarite, devoted to the Lord, covet to become one with a worshipper of Dagon? Shall one marked for a patriot of his country, match among those that were its sworn enemies? He saw this woman, ver. 1. and she *pleased him well*, ver. 3. It doth not appear, he had any reason to think her either wise or virtuous, or any way likely to be a help-meet for him, but something he saw in her face that was very agreeable to his fancy, and therefore nothing will serve, but she must be his wife. He that in the choice of a wife is guided only by his eye, and governed by his fancy, must afterwards thank himself, if he find a Philistine in his arms. (2.) Yet it was wisely, and well done, not to proceed so much as to make his addresses to her till he had first made his parents acquainted with the matter. He told them, and desired them to *get her for him to wife*, ver. 2. Herein he is an example to all children, conformable to the law of the fifth commandment. Children ought not to marry, nor to move towards it, without the advice and consent of their parents; they that do (as bishop Hall here expresseth it) *wilfully unchild themselves, and exchange natural affections for violent*. Parents have a property in their children as parts of themselves. In marriage this property is transferred, for such is the law of the relation, that *a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife*, it is therefore, not only unkind and ungrateful, but very just to alienate this property without their concurrence; who so thus *robbereth his father or mother*, stealing himself from them, who is nearer and dearer to them than their goods, and yet saith, *It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer*, Prov. xxviii. 24. (3.) His parents did well to dissuade him from yoking himself thus unequally with unbelievers. Let those who profess religion, but are courting an affinity with the profane and irreligious, are matching into families, where they have reason to think the fear of God is not, nor the worship of God, let them hear their reasoning, and apply it to themselves. *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or if none of our own tribe, never a one among all my people, never an Israelite that pleaseth thee, or that thou canst think worthy of thine affection, that thou shouldst marry a Philistine?* In the old world the sons of God corrupted, and ruined themselves and their families, and that truly primitive church by marrying with the *daughters of men*, Gen. vi. 2. God had forbidden the people of Israel to marry with the devoted nations, one of which the Philistines were, Deut. vii. 3. (4.) If there had not been a special reason for it, it had certainly been ill in him to insist upon his choice, and in them to agree to it at last: Yet their tender compliance with his affections, may be observed as an example to parents, not to be unreasonable in crossing their childrens choices, nor to deny their consent, especially to those that have seasonably

and dutifully asked it, without some very good cause. As children must obey their parents in the Lord, so parents must not provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged. This Nazarite, in his subjection to his parents, asking their consent, and not proceeding till he had it; was not only an example to all children, but a type of the holy child, Jesus, who went down with his parents to Nazareth (thence called a Nazaren) and was subject to them, Luke ii. 51.

2. But this treaty of marriage is expressly said to be of the Lord, ver. 4. Not only that God afterwards over-ruled it to serve his designs against the Philistines, but that he puts it into Samson's heart to make this choice, that he might have occasion against the Philistines. It was not a thing evil in it self, for him to marry a Philistine. It was forbidden, because of the danger of receiving hurt by idolaters, where there was not only that danger, but an opportunity hoped for, of doing that hurt to them, which would be good service to Israel, the law might well be dispensed with. It was said, chap. xiii. 25. that the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times, and we have reason to think, he himself perceived that Spirit to move him at this time, when he made this choice; and that otherwise he would have yielded to his parents dissuaves, nor would they have consented at last, if he had not satisfied them it was of the Lord. This would bring him into acquaintance and converse with them, by which he might have such opportunities of galling them, as otherwise he could not have. It should seem, the way in which the Philistines oppressed Israel, was not by great armies, but by the clandestine incursions of their giants, and small parties of their rapparees, in the same way therefore Samson must deal with them; let him but by this marriage get among them, and he would be a thorn in their sides. Jesus Christ being to deliver us from this present evil world, and to cast out the prince of it, did himself visit it, tho' full of pollution and enmity, and by assuming a body, did in some sense join in affinity with it, that he might destroy our spiritual enemies, and his own arm might work the salvation.

2. Samson by a special providence is animated and encouraged to attack the Philistines. That being the service for which he was designed, God when he called him to it, prepared him for it, by two occurrences.

1. By enabling him in one journey to Timnath, to kill a lion, ver. 5; 6. Many decline doing the service they might do, because they know not their own strength, God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face. David that was to compleat the destruction of the Philistines, must try his hand first upon a lion and a bear, that from thence he might infer, as we might suppose Samson did, that the uncircumcised Philistine should be as one of them, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. (1.) Samson's encounter with the lion was hazardous. It was a young lion, one of the fiercest sort that set upon him, roaring for his prey, and particularly set his eye upon him, he roared in meeting him, so the word is. He was all alone, in the vineyards, whither he had rambled from his father and mother, who kept the high road, probably to eat grapes. Children consider not how they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when out of a foolish fondness for liberty, they wander from under the eye and wing of their prudent pious parents: Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wines, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass. Had Samson met with this lion in the way, he might have had more reason to expect help both from God and man, than here in the solitary vineyards, out of his road. But there was a special providence in it, and the more hazardous the encounter was, (2.) The victory was so much the more illustrious. It was obtained without any difficulty, he strangled the lion, and tore out his throat with as much ease as he would have strangled a kid, yet without any instrument, not only no sword or bow, but not so much as a staff or a knife, he had nothing in his hand. Christ engaged the roaring lion, and conquered him in the beginning of his publick work, Mat. iv. 1, &c. and afterwards spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in himself, as some read it, not by any instrument. He was exalted in his own strength. That which added much to the glory of Samson's triumph over the lion was, that when he had done this great exploit, he did not boast of it, did not so much as tell his father or mother, that which many a one would soon have made the country ring of. Modesty and humility make up the brightest crown of great performances.

2. By providing him the next journey with honey in the carcase of this lion, ver. 8, 9. When he came down the next time to solemnize his nuptials, and his parents with him, he had the curiosity to turn aside into the vineyards, where he had killed the lion, perhaps that with the sight of the place, he might affect himself with the mercy of that great deliverance, and might there solemnly give thanks to God for it. It is good thus to mind our selves of God's former favours to us. There he found the carcase of the lion, the birds or beasts of prey, it is likely, had eaten the flesh, and in the skeleton a swarm of bees had knit and made a hive of it, and had not been idle, but had there laid up a good stock of honey, which was one of the staple commodities of Canaan, such plenty there was of it, that it is said to flow with milk and honey. Samson having a better title, than any man to the hive, seizeth the honey,

with his hands. This supposeth an encounter with the bees; but he that dreaded not the lion's paws, had no reason to fear their stings. As by his victory over the lion, he was emboldened to encounter the Philistine giants, if there should be occasion, notwithstanding their strength and fierceness, so by disseizing the bees, he was taught not to fear the multitude of the Philistines, tho' they compassed him about like bees, yet in the name of the Lord he should destroy them, Psal. cxviii. 12. Of the honey he here found, 1. He eat himself, asking no question for conscience sake; for the dead bones of an unclean beast had not that ceremonial pollution in them that the bone of a man had. John Baptist, that Nazarite of the New Testament, lived upon wild honey. 2. He gave to his parents, and they did eat. Did not eat all himself; Hast thou found honey, eat so much as is sufficient for thee, and no more, Prov. xxv. 16. He let his parents share with him. Children should be grateful to their parents with the fruits of their own industry, and so shew piety at home, 1 Tim. v. 4. Let those that by the grace of God have found sweetness in religion in themselves communicate their experiences to their friends and relations, and invite them to come and share with them. He told not his parents whence he had it, lest they should have scrupled eating it. Bishop Hall observes here, that those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson that decline the use of God's gifts, because they find them in ill vessels. Honey is honey still, tho' in a dead lion. Our Lord Jesus having conquered Satan that roaring lion, believers find honey in the carcase, abundant strength and satisfaction, enough for themselves, and for all their friends, from that victory.

10. ¶ So his father went down unto the woman, and Samson made there a feast: for so used the young men to do. 11. And it came to pass when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12. ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: If you can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments. 13. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle that we may hear it. 14. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy fathers house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so? 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee? 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people. 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day, before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. 19. ¶ And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle: and his anger was kindled, and he went up to his fathers house. 20. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

We have here an account of Samson's wedding-feast, and the occasion it gave him to fall foul upon the Philistines.

1. Samson conformed to the custom of the country, in making a festival of his nuptial solemnities, which continued seven days, ver. 10. Tho' he was a Nazarite, he did not affect in a thing of this nature to be singular, but did as the young men used to do upon such occasions. It is no part of religion to go contrary to the innocent usages of the places where we live; nay, it is a reproach to religion when those who profess it, give just occasion to others, to call them covetous, sneaking, and morose. A good man should strive to make himself in the best sense a good companion.

2. His wife's relations paid him the accustomed respect of the place upon that occasion, and brought him thirty young men to keep him company during the solemnity, and to attend him as his grooms-men, ver. 11. when they saw him what a comely man he was, and what an ingenious graceful look he had, they brought him

him these to do him honour, and to improve by his conversation, while he stayed among them. Or rather, when they saw him, what a strong stout man he was, they brought these seemingly to be his companions, but really to be a guard upon him, or spies to observe him. Jealous enough they were of him, but would have been more so, had they known of his victory over the lion, which therefore he had industriously concealed. The favours of Philistines have oft some mischief or other designed in them.

3. Samson, to entertain the company, propounds a riddle to them, and lays a wager with them they cannot find it out in seven days, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* The usage, it seems, was very ancient upon such occasions, when friends were together to be innocently merry, not to spend all the time in dull eating and drinking, as bishop Patrick expresseth it, or in other the gratifications of sense, as musick, dancing, or shows, but to propose questions, by which their learning and ingenuity might be tried and improved. This becomes men, wise men, that value themselves by their reason; but very unlike to it are the infamous and worse than brutish entertainments of this degenerate age, which send nothing round but the glass and the health, till reason is drowned, and wisdom sunk. Now, (1.) Samson's riddle was his own invention, for it was his own achievement that gave occasion for it, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.* Read my riddle, what is this? Beasts of prey do not yield meat for man, yet *food came from the devourer*, and those creatures that are strong when they are alive, commonly smell strong, and are every way offensive when they are dead, as horses, and yet *out of the strong*, or *out of the bitter*, so the Syriack and Arabick read it, *came sweetness.* If they have but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they have found out the riddle, and neither lions nor honey were such strangers to their country, that the thoughts of them needed to be out of the way; and the solving of the riddle, would have given him occasion to tell them the entertaining story on which it was founded. This riddle is applicable to many of the methods of divine providence and grace: When God by an over-ruling providence brings good out of evil to his church and people, when that which threatened their ruin, turns to their advantage, when their enemies are made serviceable to them, and the wrath of men turns to God's praise, then comes *meat out of the eater*, and *sweetness out of the strong.* See *Phil. i. 12.*

(2.) His wager was more considerable to him than to them, because he was one against thirty partners. It was not a wager laid upon God's providence, or upon the chance of a die, or a card, but upon their ingenuity, and amounted to no more than an honorary recompence of wit, and a disgrace upon blockishness.

4. His companions when they could not expound the riddle themselves, obliged his wife to get from him the exposition of it, *ver. 15.* Whether they were really of a dull capacity, or whether under a particular infatuation at this time, it was strange that none of the thirty could in all this time, stumble upon so plain a thing as that, *what is sweeter than honey, and what stronger than a lion?* It should seem, that in wit, as well as manners, they were barbarous; barbarous indeed, to threaten the bride, that if she would not use means with the bridegroom to let them into the meaning of it, they would *burn her and her father's house with fire.* Could any thing be more brutish? It was base enough to turn a jest into earnest, and they were unworthy of conversation, that would grow so outrageous, rather than confess their ignorance, and lose so small a wager, nor would it save their credit at all, to tell the riddle when they were told it. It was yet more villainous to engage Samson's wife to be a traitor to her own husband, and to pretend a greater interest in her than he had: Now she was married, she must *forget her own people.* Yet most inhuman of all, was it to threaten, if she could not prevail, to burn her and all her relations with fire, and all for fear of losing each of them the value of a shirt and a coat, *have ye called us to take what we have?* Those must never lay wagers that cannot lose more tamely and easily than thus.

5. His wife by unreasonable importunity obtains from him a key to his riddle. It was *on the seventh day*, i. e. the seventh day of the week (as Dr Lightfoot conjectures) but the fourth day of the feast, that they solicited her to entice her husband, *ver. 15.* and she did (1.) With great art and management, *ver. 16.* resolving not to believe he loved her, unless he would gratify her in this thing. She knew he could not bear to have his love questioned, and therefore if any thing would work upon him, that would, *Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not*, if thou deniest me, whereas he had much more reason to say, *thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not*, if thou insistest on it. And that she might not make this the test of his affection, he assures her he had not told his own parents, notwithstanding the confidence he reposed in them. If this prevail not, she will try the powerful eloquence of tears, *she wept before him the rest of the days of the feast*, choosing rather to mar the mirth, as the bride's tears must needs do, than not gain her point, and oblige her countrymen, *ver. 17.* (2.) With great success. At last, being quite wearied with her importunity, he told her what was the meaning of his riddle, and tho' we may suppose she promised secrecy, and that if he would but let her know,

she would tell no body, she immediately told it to the *children of her people*; nor could he expect better from a Philistine, especially when the interests of her country were never so little concerned. See *Mic. vii. 5. 6.* The riddle is at length unriddled, *ver. 18.* *What is sweeter than honey, or a better meat?* *Prov. xxiv. 13.* *What is stronger than a lion, or a greater devourer?* Samson generously owns they had won the wager, tho' he had good reason to dispute it, because they had not declared the riddle, as the bargain was, *ver. 12.* but it had been declared to them. But he only thought fit to tell them of it, *if ye had not ploughed with my heifer, made use of your interest with my wife, you had not found out my riddle.* Satan in his temptations, could not do us the mischief he doth, if he did not plough with the heifer of our own corrupt nature.

7. Samson pays his wager to these Philistines with the spoils of others of their countrymen, *ver. 19.* He took this occasion to quarrel with the Philistines, went down to Askeion, one of their cities, where probably he knew there was some great festival observed at this time, to which many flocked, out of whom he picked out thirty, slew them, and took their clothes, and gave them to those that had expounded the riddle: So that in balancing the account, it appeared that the Philistines were the losers, for one of the lives they lost, was worth all the suits of clothes they won, for the body is more than raiment. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him*, both to authorize and to enable him to do this.

Lastly, This proves a good occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. He found how his companions had abused him, and how his wife had betrayed him, and therefore *his anger was kindled*, *ver. 19.* Better be angry with Philistines, than in love with them, because when we join our selves to them we are most in danger of being ensnared by them. And meeting with this ill usage among them, he *went up to his father's house.* It were well for us, if the unkindnesses we meet with from the world, and our disappointments in it, had but this good effect upon us, to oblige us by faith and prayer to return to our heavenly Father's house, and rest there. The inconveniencies that occur in our way, should make us love home, and long to be there. No sooner was he gone but his wife was disposed of to another, *ver. 20.* Instead of begging his pardon for the wrong she had done him, when he justly signified his resentment of it, only by withdrawing in displeasure for a time, she presently marries him that was the chief of the guests, the friend of the bridegroom, whom perhaps she loved too well, and was too willing to oblige, when she got her husband to tell her the riddle. See how little confidence is to be put in man, when those may prove our enemies whom we have used as our friends.

C H A P. XV.

Samson, when he had courted an alliance with the Philistines, did but seek an occasion against them, chap. xiv. 4. Now here we have a further account of the occasions he took to weaken them, and to avenge not his own, but Israel's, quarrels upon them. Every thing here is surprizing; if any thing be thought incredible, because impossible, it must be remembered, that with God nothing is impossible, and it was by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him, that he was both directed to, and strengthened for, those unusual ways of making war. 1. From the perfidiousness of his wife and her father, he took occasion to burn their corn, *ver. 1—5.* 2. From the Philistines barbarous cruelty to his wife and her father, he took occasion to smite them with a great slaughter, *ver. 6—8.* 3. From the treachery of his own countrymen, who delivered him bound to the Philistines, he took occasion to kill one thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass, *ver. 9—17.* 4. From the distress he was then in for want of water, God took occasion to show him favour in a seasonable supply, *ver. 18—20.*

1. **B**UT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid, and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her, therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. 3. ¶ And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took fire-brands, and turned tail to tail, and put a fire-brand in the midst between two tails. 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing-corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing-corn, with the vineyards and olives. 6. ¶ Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? and they answered, Samson the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came

came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. 7. ¶ And Samson said unto them, though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

Here is, 1. Samson's return to his wife, whom he had left in displeasure, not hearing, perhaps, that she was given to another, when time had a little cooled his resentments, he came back to her, *visited her with a kid*, ver. 1. The value of the present was inconsiderable, but it was intended as a token of reconciliation, and perhaps was then so used, when those that had been at variance were brought together again, he sent this that he might sup with her in her apartment, and she with him on his provision, and so they might be friends again. It was generously done of Samson, tho' he was the party offended, and the superior relation, to whom therefore she was bound in duty to have addressed for peace, yet to make the first motion of reconciliation. When differences happen between near relations, let those be ever reckoned the wisest and best that are most forward to forgive and forget injuries, and most willing to stoop and yield for peace sake.

2. The repulse he met with; her father forbid him to come near her, for truly he had married her to another, ver. 2. He endeavours, (1.) To justify himself in this wrong. *I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her.* A very ill opinion he had of Samson, measuring that Nazarite by the common temper of the Philistines; could he think worse of him, than to suspect, that because he was justly angry with his wife, he utterly hated her, and because he had seen cause to return to his father's house for a while, therefore he had abandoned her for ever. Yet this is all he had to say in excuse of this injury. Thus he made the worst of jealousies, to patronize the worst of robberies. But it will never bear us out in doing ill to say, we thought others designed ill. (2.) He endeavours to pacify Samson, by offering him his younger daughter, which, because the handfomer, he thought Samson might accept, in full recompence for the wrong. See what confusions these did admit, and bring their families to, that were not governed by the fear and law of God; marrying a daughter this week to one, and next week to another; giving a man one daughter first, and then another. Samson scorned his proposal, he knew better things than to take a woman to her sister, Lev. xviii. 18.

3. The revenge Samson took upon the Philistines for this abuse. Had he designed herein only to plead his own cause, he would have challenged his rival, and would have chastized him and his father-in-law only. But he looks upon himself as a publick person, and the affront as done to the whole nation of Israel, for, probably, they put this slight upon him, because he was of that nation, and pleased themselves with it, that they had put such an abuse upon an Israelite; and therefore he resolves to do the Philistines a displeasure, and doth not doubt but this treatment he had met with among them would justify him in it, ver. 3. *Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines.* He had done what became him, in offering to be reconciled to his wife, but she having rendred it impracticable, now they could not blame him if he shewed his just resentments. Note, When differences arise, we ought to do our duty in order to the ending of them, and then whatever the ill consequences of them may be we shall be blameless. Now the way Samson took to be revenged on them, was by setting their corn-fields on fire, which would be a great weakning and impoverishing to the country, ver. 4, 5. (1.) The method he took to do it was very odd; he sent one hundred and fifty couple of foxes, tied tail to tail into the town-fields, each couple had a stick of fire between their tails, with which being terrified, they run into the corn for shelter, and so set fire to it; thus the fire would break out in many places at the same time, and therefore could not be conquered, especially if it were done, as it is probable it was, in the night. He might have employed men to do it, but perhaps he could not find Israelites enough that had courage to do it, and himself could do it but in one place at a time, which would not effect his purpose. We never find Samson in any of his exploits, making use of any person whatsoever, either servant or soldier, therefore in this project he chooseth to make use of foxes as his incendiaries. They had injured Samson by their subtilty and malice, and now Samson returns the injury by subtle foxes, and mischievous fire-brands. By the meanness and weakness of the animals he employed, he designed to put contempt upon the enemies he fought against. This stratagem is oft alluded to, to shew how the church's adversaries that are of different interests and designs among themselves, that look and draw contrary ways in other things, yet have oft united in a fire-brand, some cursed project or other to waste the church of God, and particularly to kindle the fire of division in it. (2.) The mischief he hereby did to the Philistines was very great. It was in the time of wheat-harvest, ver. 1. so that the straw being dry it soon burnt both the flocks of corn that was cut, and the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives. This was a waste of the good creatures, but where other acts of hostility are lawful, destroying the

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forrage, is justly reckoned to be so. If he might take away their lives, he might take away their livelihoods: and God was righteous in it, the corn, and the wine, and the oil, which they had prepared for Dagon to be a meat-offering to him, was thus in the season thereof made a burnt-offering to God's justice.

4. The Philistines outrage against Samson's treacherous wife and her father, understanding that they had provoked Samson to do this mischief to the country, the rabble set upon them and burnt them with fire, perhaps in their own house, ver. 6. Samson himself they durst not attack, and therefore with more justice than perhaps they themselves designed in it, they reack their quarrel upon those, who they could not but own had given him cause to be angry. Instead of taking vengeance upon Samson, they took vengeance for him, when he, out of respect to the relation he had stood in to them, was not willing to do it for himself. See his hand in it, *to whom vengeance belongs*; those that deal treacherously shall be spoiled, and dealt treacherously with, and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth; especially when, as here, he makes use of his peoples enemies as instruments of revenging his peoples quarrels one upon another. When a barbarous Philistine sets fire to a treacherous one, the righteous may rejoice to see the vengeance, Psal. lxxxv. 10, 11. Thus shall the wrath of man praise thee, Psal. lxxvi. 10. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife, that if she would not get the riddle out of him, they would burn her and her father's house with fire, chap. xiv. 15. She, to save her self, and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband, and what came of it? The very thing that she feared, and sought by sin to avoid, came upon her, she and her father's house were burnt with fire, and her countrymen, whom she sought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband, brought it upon her. The mischief we seek to escape by any unlawful practices we often pull upon our own heads. He that will thus save his life shall lose it.

5. The occasion Samson took from hence to do them yet a greater mischief, which touched their bone and their flesh, ver. 7, 8. *Though ye have done this to them, and thereby shewed what you would do to me if you could, yet that shall not deter me from being further vexatious to you.* Or tho' you think by doing this you have made me satisfaction for the affront I received among you, yet I have Israel's cause to plead as a publick person, and for the wrongs done to them, *I will be avenged on you*, and if you will then forbear your insults, I will cease, aiming at no more but the deliverance of Israel. So he smote them hip and thigh, with a great stroke. So the word is, we suppose the wounds he gave them to have been mortal, as wounds in the hip or thigh often prove, and therefore translate it, *with a great slaughter*. Some think he only lamed them, disabled them for service, as horses were houghed, or ham-strung. It seems to be a phrase used to express a desperate attack; he killed them pell-mell, or routed them horse and foot. He smote them with his hip upon thigh, i. e. with the strength he had not in his arms and hands, but in his hips and thighs, for he kicked and spurned at them, and so mortified them, *trod them in his anger, and trampled them in his fury*, Isa. lxiii. 3. And, when he had done, retired to a natural fortress in the top of the rock Etam, where he waited to see whether the Philistines would be tamed by the correction he had given them.

9. ¶ Then the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. 10. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him, as he hath done to us. 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me your selves. 13. And they spake unto him, saying, No: but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock. 14. ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. 15. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. 16. And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men. 17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that

that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

Here is, 1. Samson violently pursued by the Philistines. They went up in a body, a more formidable force than they had together when Samson smote them hip and thigh, and they pitched in Judah, and spread themselves up and down the country to find out Samson, whom they heard was come this way, *ver. 9.* When the men of Judah, who had tamely submitted to their yoke, pleaded that they had paid their tribute, and that none of their tribe had given them any offence, they freely own they designed nothing in this invasion but to seize Samson; they would fight *neither against small nor great*, but only that *Judge of Israel*, *ver. 10.* to do to him as he has done to us, i. e. to smite his hip and thigh, as he did ours, *an eye for an eye.* Here was an army came against one man, for indeed he was himself an army. Thus a whole band of men was sent to seize our Lord Jesus, that blessed Samson, tho' a tenth part would have served now his hour was come, and ten times as many would have done nothing, if he had not yielded.

2. Samson basely betrayed, and delivered up by the men of Judah, *ver. 11.* Of Judah were they? degenerate branches of that valiant tribe! utterly unworthy to carry in their standard, *the lion of the tribe of Judah.* Perhaps they were disaffected to Samson, because he was not of their tribe; out of a foolish fondness for their forfeited precedency, they would rather be oppressed by Philistines, than rescued by a Danite. Oft has the church's deliverance been obstructed by such jealousies, and niceness of a point of honour. Rather it was because they stood in awe of the Philistines, and were willing, at any rate to get them out of their country. If their spirits had not been perfectly cowed, and broken by their sins and troubles, and they had not been given up to a spirit of slumber, they would have taken this fair opportunity to shake off the Philistines yoke. If they had had the least spark of ingenuity and courage remaining in them, having so brave a man as Samson was to head them, they would now have made one bold struggle for the recovery of their liberty, but they that had debased themselves to hell in the worship of their dunghil-gods, *Isa. lvii. 9.* no marvel if they thus debased themselves to the dust, in submission to their insulting oppressors. Sin dispirits men, nay, it infatuates them, and hides from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace. Probably, Samson went into the border of that country to offer his service, *supposing his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them*, as Moses did, *Acts vii. 25.* But they thrust him from them, and very disingenuously, (1.) Blamed him for what he had done against the Philistines, as if he had done them a great injury. Such ungrateful returns have those often received that have done the best service imaginable to their country. Thus our Lord Jesus did many good works, and for those they were ready to stone him. (2.) They begged of him that he would suffer them to bind him, and deliver him up to the Philistines. Cowardly unthankful wretches! fond of their fetters, and in love with servitude! Thus the Jews delivered up our Saviour, under pretence of a fear, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation. With what a sordid servile spirit do they argue, *knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us?* And whose fault was that? they knew they had no right to rule over them, nor had they been sold into their hands, if they had not first *sold themselves to work wickedness.*

3. Samson tamely yielding to be bound by his countrymen, and delivered into the hands of his enraged enemies, *ver. 12, 13.* How easily could he have beaten them off, and kept the top of his rock against these three thousand men, and none of them all could, or durst, have laid hands on him, but he patiently submitted, (1.) That he might give an example of great meekness, mixed with great strength and courage, as one that had rule over his own spirit, he knew how to yield, as well as how to conquer. (2.) That by being delivered up to the Philistines, he might have an opportunity of making a slaughter among them. (3.) That he might be a type of Christ, who when he had shewed what he could do in striking those down that came to seize him, yielded to be bound, and led as a *lamb to the slaughter.* Samson justified himself in what he had done against the Philistines, *as they did to me, so I did to them*, it was a piece of necessary justice, and they ought not to retaliate it upon me, for they began. He indents with the men of Judah, that if put himself into their hands they should not fall upon him themselves, because then he should be tempted to fall upon them, which he was very loth to do. This they promised him, *ver. 13.* and then he surrendered, the men of Judah being his betrayers, were in effect his murderers; they would not kill him themselves, but they did that which was worse, they delivered him into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, who they knew would do worse than kill him, would abuse and torment him to death. Perhaps they thought, as some think Judas did, when he betrayed Christ, that he would by his great strength deliver himself out of their hands, but if he did, that was no thanks to them, and if they thought he would, they might of themselves have thought this again, that he could and would have delivered them too, if they would

have stuck to him, and made him their head. Justly is their misery prolonged, who, to oblige their worst enemies, thus abuse their best friend. Never were men so befotted, except those who thus treated our blessed Saviour.

4. Samson making his part good against the Philistines, even then when he was delivered into their hands, fast pinioned with two new cords. The Philistines when they had him among them, *shouted against him*, *ver. 14.* So triumphing in their success, and insulting over him; if God had not tied their hands faster than the men of Judah had tied his, they would have shot at him (as their archers did at Saul) to dispatch him presently, rather than have shouted at him; and given him time to help himself. But their security and joy was a presage of their ruin. When they shouted against him as a man run down, confident that all was their own, then the *Spirit of the Lord came upon him*, came mightily upon him, inspired him with more than ordinary strength and resolution. Thus fired, (1.) He presently got clear of his bonds, the two new cords upon the first struggle he gave broke, and were melted (as the original word is) from off his hands, no doubt, to the great amazement and terror of those that shouted against him, whose shouts were hereby turned into shrieks. Observe, When the *Spirit of the Lord came upon him* his cords were loosed; where the *Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, and those are free indeed, who are thus freed. This typified the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit of holiness; in it he loosed the bands of death, and its cords, the grave-clothes fell from his hands, without being loosed as Lazarus's were, because it was impossible that mighty Saviour should be holden of them; and thus he triumphed over the powers of darkness that shouted against him, as if they had had him sure. (2.) He made a great destruction among the Philistines, who all gathered about him to make sport with him, *ver. 15.* See how poorly he was armed, he had no better weapon than the jaw-bone of an ass, and yet what execution he did with it, he never laid it out of his hand, till he had with it laid a thousand Philistines dead upon the spot, and thus that promise was more than accomplished, *one of you shall chase a thousand*, *Josh. xxiii. 10.* A jaw-bone was an unready thing to gripe, and one would think might easily be wrested out of his hand, and that a few such blows as he gave with it should have crushed and broken it, and yet it held good to the last. Had it been the jaw-bone of a lion, especially that which he himself had slain, it might have helped to heighten his fancy, and to make him himself the more formidable, but to take the bone of that despicable animal, was to do wonders by the *foolish things of the world*, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man. One of David's worthies slew three hundred Philistines at once, but it was *with a spear*, *1 Chron. xi. 11.* Another slew of them till his hand was weary and stuck to his sword, *1 Sam. xxiii. 10.* But they all came short of Samson. What could be thought too hard, too much for him to do on whom the Spirit of the Lord came mightily. *Through God we shall do valiantly.* It was strange the men of Judah did not now come in to his aid; cowards can strike a falling enemy, but he was to be a type of him that *trod the wine-press alone.*

5. Samson celebrating his own victory, since the men of Judah would not do even that for him; he composed a short song, which he sung to himself, for the daughters of Israel did not meet him, as afterwards they did Saul, to sing with more reason, *Samson had slain his thousands.* The burthen of the song was, *with the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps have I slain a thousand men*, *ver. 16.* The same word in Hebrew (Chamor) signifies both an ass and a heap, which makes this an elegant paronomasia, and represents the Philistines, falling as tamely as asses. He also gave a name to the place, to perpetuate the Philistines disgrace, *ver. 17.* Ramath-lehi, the *lifting up of the jaw-bone*. Yet did not vain-gloriously carry the bone about with him for a shew, but threw it away when he had done with it. So little were relics valued then.

18. ¶ And he was fore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? 19. But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day. 20. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Here is, 1. The distress Samson was in after this great performance, *ver. 18.* *He was fore athirst.* It was a natural effect of the great heat he had been in, and the great pains he had taken; his zeal consumed him, eat him up, and made him forget himself, till when he had time to pause a little, he found himself reduced to the last extremity for want of water, and ready to faint. Perhaps there was a special hand of God in it, as there was in the whole transaction; and God would hereby keep him from being proud of his great strength, and great achievements, and let him know

know that he was but a man, and liable to the calamities that are common to men. And Josephus saith, it was designed to chastise him for not making mention of God and his hand, in his memorial of the victory he had obtained, but taking all the praise to himself; *I have slain a thousand men*; now he is ready to die for thirst, he is under a sensible conviction that his own arm could not have saved him, without God's right hand and arm. Samson had drunk largely of the blood of the Philistines, but blood will never quench any man's thirst. Providence so ordered it, that there was no water near him, and he was so fatigued that he could not go far to seek it; the men of Judah, one would think, should have met him, now he was come off a conqueror *with bread and wine*, as Melchizedek did Abram, to atone for the injury they had done him, but so little notice did they take of their deliverer, that he was ready to perish for want of a draught of water. Thus are the greatest flights often put upon those that do the greatest services. Christ on the cross said, *I thirst*.

2. His prayer to God in this distress. Those that forget to attend God with their praises, may perhaps be compelled to attend him with their prayers. Afflictions are often sent to bring unthankful people to God. Two things he pleads with God in this prayer. (1.) His having experienced the power and goodness of God in his late success. *Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant*. He owns himself God's servant in what he had been doing, Lord, wilt thou not own a poor servant of thine that has spent himself in thy service? *I am thine, save me*. He calls his victory a deliverance, a great deliverance, for if God had not helped him, he had not only not conquered the Philistines, but had been swallowed up by them. He owns it to come from God, and now corrects his former error, in assuming it too much to himself, and this he pleads in his present strait: Note, Past experiences of God's power and goodness, are excellent pleas in prayer for further mercy. Lord, thou hast delivered oft, wilt thou not deliver still? *2 Cor. i. 10*. Thou hast begun, wilt thou not finish? Thou hast done the greater, wilt thou not do the lesser? *Psal. lvi. 13*. (2.) His being now exposed to his enemies. *Left I fall into the hands of the uncircumcised*, and then they will triumph, will tell it in Gath, and in the streets of Askelon; and will it not redound to God's dishonour, if his champion become so easy a prey to the uncircumcised. The best pleas are those taken from God's glory.

3. The seasonable relief God sent him. God heard his prayer, and sent him water, either out of the bone, or out of the earth through the bone, *ver. 19*. That bone which he had made an instrument of God's service, God, to recompense him, made an instrument of his supply. But I rather incline to our marginal reading, *God clave a hollow place that was in Lehi*, the place of this action was, from the jaw-bone, called Lehi, even before the action we find it so named, *ver. 9, 14*. And there in that field, or hill, or plain, or whatever it was, that was so called, God caused a fountain suddenly and seasonably to open just by him, and water to spring up out of it in abundance, which continued a well ever after. Of this fair water he drank, and his spirits revived. We should be more thankful for the mercy of water, did we consider how ill we can spare it. And this instance of Samson's relief should encourage us to trust in God, and seek to him, for when he pleaseth he can *open rivers in high places*. See *Isa. xli. 17, 18*.

4. The memorial of this, in the name Samson gave to this upstart fountain, En-hakkore, *the will of him that cried*, therefore keeping in remembrance, both his own distress, which occasioned him to cry, and God's favour to him, in answer to his cry. Many a spring of comfort God opens to his people, which may fitly be called by this name, it is *the will of him that cried*. Samson had given a name to the place, which spake him great and triumphant, Ramath-lehi, *the lifting up of the jaw-bone*, but here he gives it another name, which speaks him wanting and dependent.

Lastly, The continuance of Samson's government after these achievements, *ver. 20*. At length Israel submitted to him whom they had betrayed. Now it was past dispute that God was with him, so that henceforward they all owned him, and was directed by him as their judge; *the stone which the builders refused became the head stone*. It intimates the low condition of Israel, that the government was dated by the days of the Philistines; yet it was a mercy to Israel, that tho' they were oppressed by a foreign enemy, yet they had a judge that preferred order, and kept them from ruining one another. Twenty years his government continued, according to the usage of the judge's administration, but of the particulars we have no account, save of the beginning of his government in this chapter, and the end of it in the next.

CHAP. XVI.

Samson's name (we have observed before) signifies a little sun (fol parvus); we have seen this sun rising very bright, and his morning rays strong and clear, and nothing appearing to the contrary, we take it for granted, that the middle of the day was proportionably illustrious, while he judged Israel twenty years; but the melancholy story of this chapter gives us such an account of his evening, as did not commend his day. This little sun set under a cloud, and yet just in the setting, darted forth one such strong and glo-

rious beam, as made him even then a type of Christ, conquering by death. Here is, 1. Samson greatly endangered by his familiarity with one harlot, and hardly escaping, *ver. 1—3*. 2. Samson quite ruined by his familiarity with another harlot, Delilah. Observe, 1. How he was betrayed to her by his own lusts, *ver. 4*. 2. How he was betrayed by her to his sworn enemies, the Philistines, who, 1. By her means got it out of him at last where his great strength lay, *ver. 5—17*. 2. Then robbed him of his strength, by taking from his head the crown of his separation, *ver. 18—20*. 3. Then seized him, blinded him, imprisoned him, abused him, and at a solemn festival made a shew of him, *ver. 21—25*. But, lastly, he avenged himself of them, by pulling down the theatre upon their heads, and so dying with them, *ver. 26—31*.

1. **T**HEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her. 2. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.

Here is, 1. Samson's sin, *ver. 1*. His taking a Philistine to wife in the beginning of his time was excusable, but to join himself to a harlot, that he accidentally saw among them, was such a profanation of his honour, as an Israelite, as a Nazarite; that we cannot but blush to read it. *Tell it not in Gath*. This vile impurity makes the graceful visage of this Nazarite blacker than a coal, *Lam. iv. 7, 8*. We find not that Samson had any business to Gaza; if he went thither in quest of a harlot, it would make one willing to hope, that as bad as things were otherwise, there were no prostitutes among the daughters of Israel. Some think he went thither to observe what posture the Philistines were in, that he might get some advantages against them, if so he forgot his business, neglected that, and so fell into this snare. His sin began in his eye, with which he should have made a covenant, he saw there one in the attire of a harlot, and the lust which conceived brought forth sin, he went in unto her.

2. Samson's danger; notice was sent to the magistrates of Gaza, perhaps by the treacherous harlot herself, that Samson was in the town, *ver. 2*. Probably he came in a disguise, or in the dusk of the evening, went into an inn, or publick house, which happened to be kept by this harlot. The gates of the city were hereupon shut, guards set, all kept quiet, that Samson might suspect no danger, now they thought they had him in a pound, and doubted not but to be the death of him the next morning. O that all those who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts, would see themselves thus surrounded, way laid, and marked for ruin by their spiritual enemies! The faster they sleep, and the more secure they are, the greater is their danger.

3. Samson's escape, *ver. 3*. He rose at midnight, perhaps roused by a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, (*Job xxxiii. 15*.) by his guardian angel, or rather by the checks of his own conscience; he rose in a penitent abhorrence (we hope) of the sin he was now in, and of himself, because of it, and a pious resolution not to return to it; rose under an apprehension of the danger he was in, that he was as one that slept upon the top of a mast; rose with such thoughts as these; is this a bed fit for a Nazarite to sleep in? Shall a temple of the living God be thus polluted? Can I be safe under this guilt? It was bad that he lay down without such checks; but it would have been worse, if he had lain still under them. Straight he makes towards the gate of the city, probably finds the guards asleep, else he had made them sleep their last, stays not to break open the gates, but plucks up the posts, takes them, gates and bar and all, all very large and strong, and a vast weight, yet he carries them on his back several miles, up to the top of a hill, in disdain of their attempt to secure him with gates and bars, designing thus to render himself more formidable to the Philistines, and more acceptable to his people; thus to give a proof of the great strength God had given him; and a type of Christ's victory over death and the grave. He not only rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and so came forth himself, but carried away the gates of the grave, bar and all, and so left it, ever after an open prison to all that are his; it shall not, it cannot, always detain them. *O death were is thy sting?* where are thy gates? thanks be to him, that not only gained a victory for himself, but giveth us the victory.

4. ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his

his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver. 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs, which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9. (Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber) And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire: so his strength was not known. 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 12. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. (And *there were* liars in wait abiding in the chamber) And he brake them from off his arms like a thread. 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. 14. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web. 15. ¶ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*. 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death; 17. That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mothers womb: If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

The burnt child dreads the fire; yet Samson that has more than the strength of a man, in this comes short of the wisdom of a child; for tho' he had been more than once brought into the highest degree of mischief and danger by the love of women, and lusting after them, yet he would not take warning, but is here again taken in the same snare, and this third time pays for all. Solomon seems to refer, especially to this story of Samson, when in his caution against uncleanness, he gives this account of a whorish woman, *Prov. vii. 26.* That *she hath cast down many wounded, yea many strong men have been slain by her.* And *chap. vi. 26.* That *the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.* This ill woman that brought Samson to ruin, is here named, Delilah, an infamous name, and fitly used to express the person, or thing, that by flattery or falsehood, brings mischief and destruction on those to whom kindness is pretended. See here,

1. The affection Samson had for Delilah, he loved her, *ver. 4.* some think she was his wife, but then he would have had her home to his own house, others, that he courted her to make her his wife; but there is too much reason to suspect that it was a sinful affection he had for her, and that he lived in uncleanness with her, whether she was an Israelite or a Philistine, is not certain. If an Israelite, which is scarce probable, yet she had the heart of a Philistine.

2. The interest which the lords of the Philistines made with her to betray Samson, *ver. 5.* (1.) That which they told her they designed, was to humble him, or afflict him; they would promise not to do him any hurt, only they would disable him to do them any. And so much conscience it should seem they made of this promise, that even then, when he lay never so much at their mercy, they would not kill him, no, not when the razor that cut his hair, might sooner and easier have cut his throat. (2.) That which they desired, in order hereunto, was to know where his great strength lay, and by what means he might be bound. Perhaps they imagined he had some spell or charm, which he carried about with him, by the force of which he did these great things, and doubted not, but if they could get that from him he would be manageable; and therefore having had reason enough formerly to know which was his blind-side, hoped to find out his riddle a second time by ploughing with his heifer, they engaged Delilah to get it out of him, telling her what a kindness it would be to them, and perhaps, assuring her, it should not be improved

to any real mischief, either to him or her. (3.) For this they bid high, promised to give her each of them eleven hundred pieces of silver, fifty five hundred in all. So many shekels, reckoned to above one thousand pound sterling; with this she was hired to betray one she pretended to love; see what horrid wickedness the love of money is the root of. Our blessed Saviour was thus betrayed by one whom he called friend, and with a kiss too, for filthy lucre. They that are unchaste, as Delilah, no marvel if they be unjust; such as lose their honesty in one instance will in another.

3. The arts by which he put her off from time to time, and kept his own counsel a great while. She asked him, *where his great strength lay*, and whether it were possible for him to be bound and afflicted, *ver. 6.* pretending she desired only he would satisfy her curiosity in that one thing, and that she thought it was impossible he should be bound, otherwise than by her charms. When she urged him very much, he told her, (1.) That he might be bound with *seven green withs*, *ver. 7.* The experiment was tried, *ver. 8.* but it would not do, he *broke the withs* as easily as a *thread of tow is broke when it toucheth the fire*, *ver. 9.* (2.) When she still continued her importunity, *ver. 10.* he told her, that with two new ropes he might be so cramped and hampered, that he might be as easily dealt with as any other man, *ver. 11.* This experiment was tried too, but it failed, the *new ropes* broke from off his arm *like a thread*, *ver. 12.* (3.) When she still pressed him to communicate the secret, and upbraided him with it, as an unkindness that he had bantered her so long, he then told her that the weaving of the seven locks of his head would make a great alteration in him, *ver. 13.* This came nearer the matter than any thing he had yet said, but it would not do; his strength appeared to be very much in his hair, when upon the trial of this, purely by the strength of his hair he carried away the *pin of the beam*, and *the web*.

Now in the making of all these experiments, it is hard to say, whether there appears more of Samson's weakness, or Delilah's wickedness. (1.) Could any thing be more wicked, than her restless and unreasonable importunity with him, to discover a secret, which she knew would endanger his life, if ever it were lodged any where but in his own breast. What could be more base and disingenuous, more false and treacherous, than to lay his head in her lap, as one whom she loved, and at the same time to design the betraying of him to those by whom he was mortally hated? (2.) Could any thing be more weak, than for him to continue a parley with one, that he so plainly saw was aiming to do him a mischief, that he should lend an ear so long to such an impudent request, that she might *know how to do him a mischief*; that when he had perceived liars in wait for him in the chamber, and that they were ready to apprehend him, if they had been able, he did not immediately quit the chamber, with a resolution never to come into it any more; nay, that he should again lay his head in that lap, out of which he had been so oft roused with that alarm, *the Philistines are upon thee, Samson?* One can hardly imagine, a man so perfectly befotted, and void of all consideration, as Samson now was; but whoredom is one of those things that *take away the heart*. It is hard to say what Samson meant, in suffering her to try so often whether she could weaken and afflict him; some think he did not certainly know where his strength lay, but that it should seem he did, for when he told her that which would mortify him indeed, it is said, he *told her all his heart*. It seems he designed to banter her, and to try if he could turn it off with a jest, and to baffle the *liars in wait*, and make fools of them; but it was very unwise in him that he did not quit the field, as soon as ever he perceived that he was not able to keep his ground.

4. The discovery he at last made of this great secret, and if the discovery prove fatal to him, he must thank himself, who had not power to keep his own counsel from one that manifestly sought his ruin. *Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*, but in Samson's sight is the net spread, and yet he is taken in it. If he had not been blind before the Philistines put out his eyes, he might have seen himself betrayed. Delilah signifies a consumer, she was so to him. Observe, 1. How she teased him, telling him she will not believe he loves her, unless he will gratify her in this matter, *ver. 15.* *How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?* i. e. when thou canst not trust me with the counsels of thy heart. Passionate lovers cannot bear to have their love called in question, they would do any thing rather than their sincerity should be suspected, here therefore Delilah had this fond fool (excuse me that I call him so) at an advantage. This expostulation is indeed grounded upon a great truth, that those only have our love, not that have our good words, or our good wishes, but that have our hearts. That is love without dissimulation; but it is falsehood and flattery in the highest degree; to say we love those with whom our hearts are not. How can we say we love either our brother, whom we have seen, or God, whom we have not seen, if our hearts be not with them? She continued many days vexatious to him with her importunity, so that he had no pleasure of his life with her, *ver. 16.* why then did he not leave her? It was because he was captivated to her by the power of love, falsely so called, but truly lust. This bewitched, and perfectly intoxicated him, and by the force of it, see, 2. How she conquered him, *ver. 17.* He *told her all his heart*. God left him to

to himself to do this foolish thing, to punish him for indulging himself in the lusts of uncleanness. The angel that foretold his birth, said nothing of his great strength, but only that he should be a Nazarite, and particularly that *no razor should come upon his head*, chap. xiii. 5. His consecration to God was to be his strength, for he was to be *strengthened according to the glorious power of that Spirit which wrought in him mightily*, that his strength, by promise, might be a type and figure of the spiritual strength not by nature, might be a type and figure of the spiritual strength of believers, Col. i. 11, 29. Therefore the badge of his consecration was the pledge of his strength, if he lose the former, he knows he forfeits the latter. If I be shaven I am no longer a Nazarite, and then my strength is gone. The making of his bodily strength to depend so much on his hair, which could have no natural influence upon it, either one way or other, teacheth us to magnify divine institutions, and to expect God's grace, and the continuance of it, only in the use of those means of grace, wherein he has appointed us to attend upon him, the word, sacraments, and prayer. In these earthen vessels is this treasure.

18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. 19. And she made him sleep upon her knees, and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head, and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. 20. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out at other times before, and shake my self. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. 21. ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison-house.

We have here the fatal consequences of Samson's folly, in betraying his own strength, he soon paid dear for it. *A whore is a deep ditch, he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.* In that pit Samson sinks. Observe,

1. What care Delilah took to make sure the money for her self. She now perceived by the manner of his speaking, that he had told her all his heart, and the lords of the Philistines that hired her to do this base thing are sent for, but they must be sure to bring the money in their hands, ver. 18. The wages of unrighteousness are accordingly produced, unknown to Samson; it would grieve one's heart, to see one of the bravest men then in the world sold and bought, as a *sheep for the slaughter*; how doth this instance fully all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength.

2. What course she took to deliver him up to them according to the bargain. Many in the world would for the hundredth part of what was here given Delilah, sell those that they pretend the greatest respect for. *Trust not in a friend then, put not confidence in a guide.* See what a treacherous method she took, ver. 19. she made him sleep upon her knees. Josephus saith, she gave him some intoxicating liquor, which laid him to sleep; what opiates she might steal into his cup, we know not, but we cannot suppose that he knowingly drank wine or strong drink, for that would have been a forfeiture of his Nazariteship, as much as the cutting off of his hair. She pretended the greatest kindness then when she designed the greatest mischief; which yet she could not have compassed, if she had not made him sleep. See the fatal consequences of security; Satan ruins men by rocking them asleep, flattering them into a good opinion of their own safety, and so bringing them to mind nothing, and fear nothing, and then he robs them of their strength and honour, and leads them captive at his will. When we sleep our spiritual enemies do not. When he was asleep she had a barber ready to cut off his hair, which he did so silently and so quickly that it did not awake him, but plainly afflicted him, even in his sleep, his spirits manifestly sunk upon it. I think we may suppose, that if this ill turn had been done him in his sleep by some spiteful body, without his being himself accessory to it, as he was here, it would not have had this strange effect upon him, but it was his own wickedness that corrected him. It was his iniquity, else it had not been so much his infelicity.

3. What little concern he himself was in at it, ver. 20. He could not but miss his hair as soon as he awoke, and yet said, *I will shake my self, as at other times*, after sleep; or as at other times, when the Philistines are upon me, to make my part good against them: Perhaps he thought to shake himself the easier, and that his head would feel the lighter, now his hair was cut, little thinking how much heavier the burthen of guilt was, than that of hair. He soon found in himself some change, we have reason to think so; and yet wist not that the Lord was departed from him. He did not consider that that was the reason of the change. Note, Many have lost the favourable presence of God, and are not aware of it; they have provoked God to withdraw from them, but are not

sensible of their loss, nor ever complain of it. Their souls languish, and are grown weak, their gifts wither, every thing goes cross with them, and yet they impute not this to the right cause, they are not aware that *God is departed from them*, nor are they in any care to reconcile themselves to him, or to recover his favour. When God is departed, we cannot do, as at other times.

4. What improvement the Philistines soon made of their advantages against him, ver. 21. The Philistines took him when God was departed from him; those that have thrown themselves out of God's protection become an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we shall certainly wake in the hands of the Philistines. It is probable they had promised Delilah not to kill him, but they took an effectual course to disable him, the first thing they did when they had him in their hands, and found they could manage him, was to *put out his eyes, by applying fire to them*, saith the Arabick version. They considered that his eyes would never come again, as perhaps his hair might, and that the strongest arms could do little without eyes to guide them, and therefore, if now they bind him, they for ever bind him. His eyes were the inlets of his sin, he saw the harlot at Gaza, and went in unto her, ver. 1. and now his punishment began there. Now the Philistines had blinded him, he had time to remember how his own lust had blinded him. The best preservative of the eyes, is to turn them away from beholding vanity. They brought him down to Gaza, that there he might appear in weakness, where he had lately given such proofs of his strength, ver. 3. and be a jest to those to whom he had been a terror. They bound him with fetters of brass, who had before been held in the cords of his own iniquity, and he did grind in the prison, work in their Bridewell, either for their profit, or his punishment, or both. The devil doth thus by sinners, blinds the minds of them which believe not, and so enslaves them, and secures them in his interests. Poor Samson, how art thou fallen! how is thine honour laid in the dust! how is the glory and defence of Israel become the drudge and triumph of the Philistines! *The crown is fallen from his head, and wo unto him, for he hath sinned.* Let all take warning by his fall, carefully to preserve their purity, and to watch against all fleshly lusts; for all our glory is gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites is profaned.

22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. 23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together, for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoyce: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. 24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god had delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. 27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there: and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. 28. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars, upon which the house stood, and on which it was born up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines: and he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life. 31. Then his brethren, and all the house of his father, came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father: and he judged Israel twenty years.

Tho' the last stage of Samson's life was inglorious, and one could wish there were a veil drawn over it, yet this account here given of his death, may be allowed to lessen, tho' it do not quite roll away, the reproach of it, for there was honour in his death. No doubt, he greatly repented of his sin, the dishonour he had by it done to God, and his forfeiture of the honour God had put upon him; for that God was reconciled to him, appears, 1. By the return of the sign of his Nazariteship, ver. 22. *his hair began to grow again, as when he was shaven*, i. e. to be as thick and as long

as when it was cut off. It is probable, their general thanksgiving to Dagon was not long deferred, before which Samson's hair was thus grown, by which, and the particular notice taken of it, it seems to have been extraordinary, and designed for a special indication of the return of God's favour to him upon his repentance. For the growth of his hair was neither cause nor sign of the return of his strength, further than as it was the badge of his consecration, and a token that God accepted him as a Nazarite again, after the interruption, without those ceremonies which were appointed for the restoration of a lapsed Nazarite, which he had not now the opportunity of performing, *Numb. vi. 9.* It is strange the Philistines, in whose hands he was, were not jealous of the growth of his hair again, and did not cut it, but perhaps they were willing his great strength should return to him, that they might have so much the more work out of him, and now he was blind, they were in no fear of any hurt from him.

2. By the use God made of him for the destruction of the enemies of his people, and that at a time when it would be most for the honour of God, and the vindication of that, and not immediately for the defence and deliverance of Israel. Observe,

1. How insolently the Philistines affronted the God of Israel.

(1.) By the sacrifices they offered to Dagon, his rival. This Dagon they call their god, a god of their own making, represented by an image, the upper part of which was in the shape of a man, the lower part of a fish, purely the creature of fancy, yet it served them to set up in opposition to the true and living God. To this pretended deity, they ascribe their success, *ver. 23, 24.* *Our god has delivered Samson our enemy, and the destroyer of our country into our hands.* So they dreamed, tho' he could do neither good nor evil. They knew Delilah had betrayed him, and they had paid her for doing it, yet they attribute it to their god, and are confirmed by it in their belief of his power to protect them; all people will thus walk in the name of their gods, they will give them the praise of their achievements; and shall not we pay this tribute to our God whose kingdom ruleth over all? Yet considering what wicked arts they used to get Samson into their hands, it must be confessed it was only such a dunghill-deity as Dagon, that was fit to be made a patron of the villainies. Sacrifices were offered, and songs of praise sung on the general thanksgiving day for this victory obtained over one man, and great expressions of joy, and all to the honour of Dagon. Much more reason have we, to give the praise of all our successes to our God; *Thanks be to him who causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus.* (2.) By the sport they made with Samson, God's champion, they reflected on God himself. When they were merry with wine, to make them more merry, Samson must be fetched to make them sport, *ver. 25, 27. i. e.* for them to make sport with. Having sacrificed to their god, and eat and drunk upon the sacrifice, they rose up to play, according to the usage of idolaters, *1 Cor. x. 7.* and Samson must be the fool in the play. They made themselves, and one another laugh, to see how, being blind, he stumbled and blundered. It is likely, they *smote this Judge of Israel upon the cheek*, (*Mic. v. 1.*) and said, *prophecy who smote thee.* It was an instance of their barbarity, to trample thus upon a man in misery, at the sight of whom, a while ago, they would have trembled. It put Samson into the depth of misery, and as a sword in his bones were their reproaches, when they said, *where is now thy God!* Nothing could be more grievous to so great a spirit; yet being a penitent, that makes him patient, and he accepts it as the punishment of his iniquity. How unrighteous soever the Philistines were, he could not but own that God was righteous. He had sported himself in his own deceivings, and with his own deceivers, and justly are the Philistines let loose upon him to make sport with him. Uncleanliness is a sin that makes men vile, and exposeth them to contempt; *a wound and dishonour shall he get*, whose heart is deceived by a woman, and *his reproach shall not be wiped away.* Everlasting shame and contempt will be the portion of those that are blinded and bound by their own lusts. The devil that deceived them, will insult over them.

2. How justly the God of Israel, brought sudden destruction upon them, by the hands of Samson. Thousands of the Philistines were got together, to attend their lords in the sacrifices and joys of this day, and to be the spectators of this comedy, but it proved to them a fatal tragedy, for they were all slain, and buried in the ruins of the house, whether it were a temple or a theatre, or some slight building run up for the purpose, is uncertain. Observe,

1. Who were destroyed. All the *lords of the Philistines*, *ver. 27.* who had by bribes corrupted Delilah, to betray Samson to them. Evil pursued those sinners. Many of the people likewise, to the number of three thousand, and among them a great many women, one of which, it is likely, was that harlot of Gaza, mentioned, *ver. 1.* Samson had been drawn into sin by the Philistine women, and now a great slaughter is made among them, as was by Moses's order among the women of Midian, because it was they that *caused the children of Israel to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor*, *Numb. xxxi. 16.*

2. When they were destroyed. (1.) When they were merry, secure, and jovial, and far from apprehending themselves in any danger. When they saw Samson lay hold on the pillars, we may suppose it served them for a jest, and they made sport with that too; *what will this feeble Jew do?* How are

sinners brought to desolation in a moment! They are lifted up in pride and mirth, that their fall may be the more dreadful. Let us never enjoy the mirth of wicked people, but infer from this instance, that their triumphing is short, and their joy but for a moment. (2.) It was when they were praising Dagon their god, and giving that honour to him, which is due to God only; which is no less than treason against the king of kings, his crown and dignity, justly therefore is the blood of these traitors mingled with their sacrifices. Belshazzar was cut off when he was praising his made gods, *Dan. v. 4.* (3.) It was when they were making sport with an Israelite, a Nazarite, and insulting over him; prosecuting him whom God had smitten. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person or people, faster than mocking and misusing the servants of God, yea, tho' it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront that make sport with a good man.

3. How they were destroyed. Samson pulled the house down upon them, God no doubt putting it into his heart, as a publick person, thus to avenge God's quarrel with them, Israel's, and his own. (1.) He gained strength to do it by prayer, *ver. 28.* That strength which he had lost by sin, like a true penitent, he recovers by prayer, as David, who when he had provoked the Spirit of grace to withdraw, prayed, *Psal. li. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.* We may suppose this was only a mental prayer, and that his voice was not heard, for it was made in a noisy clamorous crowd of Philistines, but tho' his voice was not heard of men, yet his prayer was heard of God, and graciously answered, and tho' he lived not to give an account himself of this his prayer, as Nehemiah did of his, yet God not only accepted it in heaven, but by revealing it to the inspired penman, provided for the registering of it in his church. He prayed to God to remember him, and strengthen him this once, thereby owning that his strength for what he had already done, he had from God, and begs it might be afforded to him once more, to give them a parting blow. That it was not from a principle of passion or personal revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and Israel, that he desired to do this, appears by God's accepting and answering the prayer. Samson died praying, so did our blessed Saviour, but Samson prayed for vengeance, Christ for forgiveness. (2.) He gained opportunity to do it, by leaning on the two pillars, which were the chief supports of the building, and were it seems so near together, that he could take hold of them both at one time, *ver. 26, 29.* Having hold of them, he bore them down with all his might, crying aloud, *Let me die with the Philistines*, *ver. 30. Animamque in vulnere ponit.* The vast concourse of people that was upon the roof looking down through it to see the sport, we may suppose contributed to the fall of it. A weight so much greater than ever it was designed to carry, might perhaps have sunk of itself, and made the fall more fatal to those within: And indeed few of either could escape being either stifled or crushed to death. This was done not by any natural strength of Samson, but by the almighty power of God, and is not only marvellous but miraculous in our eyes.

Now in this, 1. The Philistines were greatly mortified. All their lords and great men were killed, and abundance of their people, and this in the midst of their triumph; the temple of Dagon (as many think the house was) pulled down, and Dagon buried in it. This would give a great check to the insolence of the survivors, and if Israel had had but so much sense and spirit left them, as to improve the advantages of this juncture, they might now have thrown off the Philistines yoke. 2. Samson may very well be justified, and brought in not guilty of any sinful murder, either of himself or of the Philistines. He was a publick person, a declared enemy to the Philistines, against whom he might therefore take all advantages; they were now in the most barbarous manner making war upon him, all present were aiding and abetting, and justly die with them. Nor was he any more *felo de se*, or a self-murderer in it, for it was not his own life that he aimed at, tho' he had too much reason to be weary of it, but the lives of Israel's enemies, for the reaching of which he bravely resigned his own, not *counting it dear to him, so he might finish his course* with honour. 3. God was very much glorified, in pardoning Samson's great transgressions, of which this was an evidence. It has been said, that the prince's giving of a commission to one convicted, amounts to a pardon. Yet *tho' he was a God that forgave him, he took vengeance of his inventions*, *Psal. xcix. 8.* And by suffering his champion to die in fetters, warned all to take heed of those lusts, which war against the soul. However, we have good reason to hope, that tho' Samson died with the Philistines, he had not his everlasting portion with them. *The Lord knows them that are his.* 4. Christ was plainly typified. He pulled down the Devil's kingdom, as Samson did Dagon's temple, and when he died, obtained the most glorious victory over the powers of darkness. Then when his arms were stretched out upon the cross, as Samson's to the two pillars, he gave a fatal shake to the gates of hell, and *through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, *Heb. ii. 14, 15.* And herein exceeded Samson, that he not only died with the Philistines, but rose again to triumph over them.

Lastly, The story of Samson, concludes (1.) with an account of his burial; his own relations, animated by the glories that attended

tended his death, came and found out his body among the slain, brought it honourably to his own country, and buried it in the place of his fathers sepulchres; the Philistines being in such a consternation, that they durst not oppose it. (2.) With the repetition of the account we had before of the continuance of his government, *he judged Israel twenty years*, and if they had not been as mean and sneaking, as he was brave and daring, he had left them clear of the Philistines yoke. They might have been easy, safe, and happy, if they would but have given God and their judges leave to make them so.

C H A P. XVII.

All agree, that what is related in this, and the rest of the chapters to the end of this book, was not done, as the story is laid, after Samson, but long before, even soon after the death of Joshua, in the days of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, chap. xx. xxviii. But it is cast here into the latter part of the book, that it might not interrupt the history of the Judges. That it might appear how happy the nation was in the Judges, here is shewed how unhappy they were when there was none. 1. Then idolatry began in the family of Micah, chap. xvii. 2. Then it spread itself into the tribe of Dan, chap. xviii. 3. Then villainy was committed in Gibeah of Benjamin, chap. xix. 4. Then that whole tribe was destroyed for countenancing it, chap. xx. 5. Then odd sort of ways were taken to keep up that tribe, chap. xxi. Therefore blessed be God for the government we are under. In this chapter we are told how Micah an Ephraimite furnished himself, 1. With an image for his God, ver. 1—6. 2. With a Levite, such a one as he was, for his priest, ver. 7—13.

1. **A**ND there was a man of mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver, that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears; behold, the silver is with me, I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. 3. And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD, from my hand, for my son to make a graven image, and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4. Yet he restored the money unto his mother, and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image, and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. 5. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Here is, 1. Micah and his mother quarrelling. (1.) The son robs the mother. The old woman had hoarded, with long scraping and saving, a great sum of money, eleven hundred pieces of silver. It is likely, she intended, when she died, to leave it to her son, in the mean time, it did her good to look upon it, and to count it over; the young man has a family of children grown up, for he had one of age to be a priest, ver. 5. He knows where to find his mother's cash, thinks he has more need of it than she has, cannot stay till she dies, and so takes it away privately, for his own use. Tho' it is a fault in parents to withhold from their children that which is meet, and put them into temptation to wish them in their graves, yet even that will by no means excuse the wickedness of those children that steal from their parents, and think all their own they can get from them by never so indirect methods. (2.) The mother curseth the son, or whoever had taken her money. It should seem she suspected her son, for when she cursed, she spake in his ears so loud, and with so much passion and vehemence, as made both his ears to tingle. See what mischief the love of money makes, how it destroys the duty and comfort of every relation. It was the love of money that made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her, and made her so unkind and void of natural affection to her son, as to curse him if he had it and concealed it. Outward losses drive good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her god, before it was made either into a graven or a molten image; else the loss of it would not have put her into such a passion, as quite to forget and break through all the laws of decency and piety. It is a very foolish thing for those that are provoked to throw their curses about, *as a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows and death*, since they know not, but they may light upon those that are most dear to them.

2. Micah and his mother reconciled, (1.) The son was so terrified with the mother's curses that he restored the money. Tho' he had so little grace as to take it, he had so much left as not to dare to keep it, when his mother had sent a curse after it. He cannot believe his mother's money would do him any good,

without his mother's blessing, nor dare he deny the theft when he is charged with it, nor retain the money when it is demanded by the right owner. It is best not to do evil, but it is next best when it is done, to undo it again, by repentance, confession, and restitution. Let children be afraid of having the prayers of their parents against them; for tho' the curse causeless shall not come; yet that which is justly deserved may be justly feared, even tho' it was passionately and indecently uttered. (2.) The mother was so pleased with her son's repentance, that she recalled her curses, and turned them into prayers for her son's welfare; *Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son*. When those that have been guilty of a fault, appear to be free and ingenuous in owning it, they ought to be commended for their repentance, rather than still be condemned and run upon for the fault.

3. Micah and his mother agreeing to turn the money into a god, and set up idolatry in their family, and this seems to have been the first instance of the revolt of any Israelite from God, and his instituted worship, after the death of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived him, and is therefore thus particularly related. And tho' this was only the worship of the true God by an image, against the second commandment, yet this opened the door to the worship of other gods, Baalim and the groves, against the first and great commandment. Observe,

1. The mother's contrivance of this matter. When the silver was restored, she pretends she had *dedicated it to the Lord*, ver. 3. either before it was stolen, and she would have that thought to be the reason why she was so much grieved at the loss of it, and imprecated evil on him that had taken it, because it was a dedicated, and therefore an accursed thing. Or, after it was stolen, she had made a vow, that if she could retrieve it, she would dedicate it to God, and then she would have the providence that had so far favoured her as to bring it back to her hands, to be an owning of her vow. Come, saith she to her son, the money is mine, but thou hast a mind of it, let it be neither mine nor thine, but let us both agree to make it into an image for a religious use. Had she put it to a use that had been indeed for the service and honour of God, it had been a good way of accommodating the matter between them, but as it was, the project was wicked. Probably, this old woman was one of those that came out of Egypt, and would have such images made as she had seen there; now she began to dote, she called to remembrance the follies of her youth, and perhaps told her son, that this way of worshipping God by images was, to her knowledge, the old religion.

2. The son's compliance with her. It should seem when she first proposed the thing he stumbled at it, knowing what the second commandment was, for when she said, ver. 3. she designed it for her son to make an image of, yet he restored it to his mother (being loth to have a hand in making the image) and she gave it the founder and had the thing done, blaming him perhaps for scrupling it, ver. 4. But when the images were made, Micah, by his mother's persuasion, was not only well reconciled to them, but hugely pleased and in love with them, so strangely bewitching was idolatry, and much supported by traditions received from their parents, 1 Pet. i. 18. Jer. xlv. 17. But observe how the old woman's covetousness prevailed in part above her superstition; she had wholly dedicated the silver, to make the graven and molten image, ver. 3. all the eleven hundred pieces, but when it came to be done, she made less than a fifth part serve, even *two hundred shekels*, ver. 4. She thought that enough, and indeed it was too much to give for an image that is a teacher of lies. Had it been devoted truly to the honour of God, he would not thus have been put off with part of the price, but would have signified his resentment of the affront, as he did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Now observe, 1. What was the corruption here introduced, ver. 5. The man Micah had *a house of gods, a house of God*, so the LXX, for so he thought it, as good as that at Shiloh, and better because his own, of his own inventing, and at his own dispose, for people love to have their religion under their girdle, to manage it as they please. A house of error, so the Chaldee, for really it was so, a deviation from the way of truth, and an inlet to all deceit. Idolatry is a great cheat, and one of the worst of errors. That which he aimed at in the progress of his idolatry, whether he designed it at first or no was to mimic and rival both God's oracles, and his ordinances. (1.) His oracles. For he made *Teraphim*, little images which he might advise with as there was occasion, and receive informations, directions, and predictions from. What the *Urim* and *Thummim* were to the prince and people, these *Teraphim* should be to his family; yet he could not think that the true God should own them, or give answers by them, and therefore depended upon such daemons as the heathen worshipped, to inspire them, and make them serviceable to him. Thus while the honour of Jehovah was pretended, ver. 3. yet his institution being relinquished, they unavoidably lapsed into downright idolatry and daemon-worship. (2.) His ordinances; some room or apartment in the house of Micah was appointed for the temple or house of God, an ephod or holy garment was provided for his priest to officiate in, in imitation of those used at the tabernacle of God; and one of his sons he consecrated, probably the eldest, to his priest. And when he had set up a graven or molten image to represent the object of his worship, no marvel if a priest of his own getting, and his own making, served to be

the manager of it. Here is no mention of any altar, sacrifice, or incense, in honour of these silver gods, but having a priest, it is likely he had all these; unless we suppose, that at first his gods were intended only to be advised with, not to be adored like Laban's Teraphim; but the beginning of idolatry, as of other sins, is like the letting forth of water. Break the dam, and you bring a deluge. Here idolatry began, and it spread like a fretting leprosy. Dr Lightfoot would have us observe, that as eleven hundred pieces of silver were here devoted to the making of an idol, which ruined religion, especially in the tribe of Dan (as we shall find after) which was Samson's tribe, so eleven hundred pieces of silver was given by each Philistine lord for the ruin of Samson.

2. What was the cause of this corruption, *ver. 6. there was no king in Israel*, no judge or sovereign prince to take cognizance of the setting up of these images, which doubtless the country about soon resorted to, and to give orders for the destroying of them, none to convince Micah of his error, and to restrain and punish him, to take this disease in time, by which the spreading of the infection might have been happily prevented. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. When they were without a king to keep good order among them, God's house was forsaken, his priests neglected, and all went to ruin among them. See what a mercy government is, and what reason there is, that not only prayers and intercessions, but giving of thanks, should be made for kings and all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. Nothing contributes more under God to the support of religion in the world, than the due administration of those two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry.

7. ¶ And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8. And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12. And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

We have here an account of Micah's furnishing himself with a Levite for his chaplain, either thinking his son, because the heir of his estate, too good to officiate, or rather, because not of God's tribe, not good enough.

Observe, 1. What brought this Levite to Micah. By his mother's side he was of the family of Judah, and lived at Beth-lehem among his mother's relations, for that was no Levites city, or upon some other account, as a stranger or inmate, sojourned there, *ver. 7.* Thence he went to sojourn where he could find a place, and in his travels came to the house of Micah in mount Ephraim, *ver. 8.* Now (1.) Some think it was his unhappiness that he was under a necessity of removing, either because he was persecuted and abused, or rather neglected and starved, at Bethlehem. God had made plentiful provision for the Levites, but the people withheld their dues, and did not help them into the possession of the cities assigned them, so that they were reduced to straits, and no care was taken for their relief. Israel's forsaking of God begun with forsaking the Levites, which therefore they are warned against, *Deut. xii. 19.* It is a sign religion is going to decay, when good ministers are neglected, and at a loss for a livelihood. But (2.) It seems rather to have been his fault and folly that he loved to wander, threw himself out where he was, and forfeited the respects of his friends, and having a roving head, would go seek his fortune, as we say. We cannot conceive that things were yet come to that ill pass among them, that a Levite should be poor, unless it was his own fault. As those are fit to be pitied that would fix but may not, so those are fit to be punished that might fix but will not. Unsettledness being, one would think, a constant uneasiness, it is strange that any Israelite, especially any Levite, should affect it.

2. What bargain Micah made with him. Had he not been well enough content with his son for his priest, he would have gone or sent abroad to enquire out a Levite, but now he only takes hold of one that drops into his hands, which shewed that he had no great zeal in the matter. It is probable, this rambling Levite heard in the country of Micah's house of gods, his graven and molten image, which if he had any thing of the spirit of a Levite in him, should have brought him thither, to reprove Micah for his idolatry, to tell how directly contrary it was to the law of God, and how it would bring the judgments of God upon

him, but instead of that, like a base and degenerate branch of that sacred tribe, thither he goes to offer his service, with *have you any work for a Levite?* for I am out of business, and go to sojourn where I may find a place; all he aimed at was to get bread, not to do good, *ver. 9.* Micah courts him into his family, *ver. 10.* and promiseth him (1.) Good preferment, be unto me a father and a priest: Tho' a young man, and taken up at the door, yet if he take him for a priest, he will respect him as a father, so far from setting him among his servants. He asks not for his credentials, takes no time to enquire how he carried himself in the place of his last settlement, considers not whether, tho' he were a Levite, yet he might not be of such an ill character, as to be a plague and scandal to his family, but thinks, tho' he were never so great a rake, he might serve for a priest to a graven image, like Jeroboam's priests of the lowest of the people, 1 Kings xii. 31. They that can make any thing serve for a god, no marvel if they make any thing serve for a priest. (2.) A tolerable maintenance. He will allow him meat, and drink, and clothes, a double suit, so the word is in the margin, a better and a worse, one for every day's wear, and one for holydays, and ten shekels, about twenty-five shillings a year for spending-money, a poor salary, in comparison of what God provided for the Levites that carried themselves well, but those that forsake God's service will never mend themselves, nor find a better master. The ministry is the best calling, but the worst trade in the world.

3. The Levite's settlement with him, *ver. 11.* He was content to dwell with the man, tho' his work was superstitious, and his wages scandalous, he objected against neither, but thought himself happy that he had light on so good a house. Micah thinking himself holier than any of his neighbours, presumes to consecrate this Levite, *ver. 12.* As if his building, furnishing, and endowing, this chapel, authorized him, not only to appoint the person that should officiate there, but to confer those orders upon him which he had no right to give, nor the other to receive. And now he shews his respects as a father, and tenderness as a son, and with that is willing to make up the deficiency of the coin he gave him.

4. Micah's satisfaction in this, *ver. 13.* Now know I that the Lord will do me good, i. e. he hoped that his new establishment would gain reputation among his neighbours, and that would turn to his advantage, for he would share in the profits of his altar, or rather, that God would countenance and bless him in all he put his hand unto, because I have a Levite to be my priest. 1. He thought it was a sign of God's favour to him and his images, that he had so opportunely sent a Levite to his door. Thus they who please themselves with their own delusions, if providence unexpectedly brings any thing to their hands that furthers them in their evil way, are too apt from thence to infer that God is pleased with them. 2. He thought now the error of his priesthood was amended, all was well, tho' he still retained his graven and molten image. Note, Many deceive themselves into a good opinion of their state, by a partial reformation. They think they are as good as they should be, because in some one particular instance, they are not so bad as they have been, as if the correcting of one fault, would atone for a persisting in all the rest. 3. He thought the making of a Levite into a priest was a very meritorious act, which really was a presumptuous usurpation, and very provoking to God. Mens pride, and ignorance, and self-flattery, will undertake, not only to justify, but magnify, and sanctify, the most daring impieties and invasions upon the divine prerogatives. With much reason might Micah have said, now may I fear that God will curse me, because I have debauched one of his own tribe, and drawn him into the worship of a graven image; yet for this he hopes God will do him good. 4. He thought that having a Levite in the house with him, would of course entitle him to the divine favour. Carnal hearts are apt to build too much upon their external privileges, and to conclude, that God will certainly do them good, because they are born of godly parents, dwell in praying families, are linked in society with those that are very good, and sit under a lively ministry, whereas all this is but like having a Levite to be their priest, which amounts to no security at all, that God will do them good, unless they be good themselves, and make a good use of these advantages.

C H A P. XVIII.

How idolatry crept into the family of Micah, we read in the chapter before, how it was translated from thence into the tribe of Dan, we have an account in this chapter, and now it gained a settlement in a city of note; for how great a matter doth a little fire kindle! The tribe of Dan had their lot assigned them last of all the tribes, and it happening to be too strait for them, a considerable city in the utmost corner of Canaan northward was added to it, let them get it and take it; it was called Laish and Lechem, *Josh. xix. 47.* Now here we are told, (1.) How they sent spies to bring them an account of the place, who by the way got acquainted with Micah's priest, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) What an encouraging report these spies brought back, *ver. 7—10.* (3.) What forces were sent to conquer Laish, *ver. 11—13.* (4.) How they by the way plundered Micah of his gods, *ver. 14—26.* (5.) How easily they conquered Laish, *ver. 27—29.* and when they had it, set up the graven image in it, *ver. 30, 31.*

IN those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites fought them an inheritance to dwell in: for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spie out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3. When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4. And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

Here is, 1. The eye which these Danites had upon Laish, not the whole tribe of Dan, but one family of them, to whose lot, in the subdivision of Canaan, that city fell. Hitherto this family had sojourned with their brethren, who had taken possession of their lot, which lay entire between Judah and the Philistines, and had declined going to their own city, because there was *no king in Israel* to over-rule them, *ver. 1.* It lay a great way off, separate from the rest of their tribe, it was intire in the enemy's hand, and therefore they would sponge upon their brethren, rather than go far to provide for themselves. But at length necessity forced them to it, and they began to think of an inheritance to dwell in. It is better have a little of one's own, than always to hang upon others.

2. The enquiry which this family of the Danites made concerning Laish. They sent *five men to search the land*, *ver. 2.* that they might know the character of the country, whether it were an inheritance worth going so far for, and the posture of the people, whether the making of themselves masters of it was a thing practicable, what force was necessary in order thereunto, and which was the best way of making an attack upon it. The men they sent were men of valour, that if they fell into their enemies hands, knew how to look danger in the face. It is prudent to look before we leap; Dan had the subtilty of *a serpent by the way*, Gen. xlix. 17. as well as the courage of *a lion's whelp, leaping from Babylon*, Deut. xxxiii. 22.

3. The acquaintance which their spies got with Micah's priest, and the improvement they made of that acquaintance. It seems they had known this Levite formerly, he having in his rambles been sometimes in their country, and tho' his countenance might be altered, they knew him again by his voice, *ver. 3.* They were surprized to find him so far off, enquired what brought him thither, and he told them, *ver. 4.* what business he had there, and what encouragement. They understanding that he had an oracle in his custody, desired he would tell them whether they should prosper in their present undertaking, *ver. 5.* See their carelessness and regardlessness of God and his providence, they would not have enquired of the Lord at all, if this Levite's mentioning the teraphim he had with him had not put it into their heads. Many never think of religion, but just when it falls in their way, and they cannot avoid it, like chance-customers. See their ignorance of the divine law, that they thought God, who had forbidden the religious use of graven images, would yet own them in consulting an image, and give them an answer of peace, *should he be enquired of by them?* Ezek. xiv. 3. They seem to have had a greater opinion of Micah's Teraphim, than of God's Urim, for they had passed by Shiloh, and for ought appears, had not enquired there of God's high-priest, but Micah's shabby Levite shall be an oracle to them. He betakes himself to his usual method of consulting his Teraphim, and whether he himself believed it or no, he humoured the thing so well, that he made them believe he had an answer from God, encouraging them to go on, and assuring them of good success, *ver. 6.* *Go in peace, you shall be safe, and may be easy, for before the Lord is your way*, i. e. he approves it, as the Lord is said to *know the way of the righteous* with acceptation, and therefore he will make it prosperous, his eye will be upon you for good, he will direct your way, and preserve your *going out and coming in*. Note, Our great care should be, that our way be such as God approves, and if it be so, we may go in peace. If God care for us, on him let us cast our care, and be satisfied that we cannot miss our way, if he go before us.

7. ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and *there was no magistrate in the land* that

No. xix,

might put *them* to shame in any thing, and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah, and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? 9. And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good: and *are ye still?* be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands: a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth. 11. ¶ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men, appointed with weapons of war. 12. And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim. 13. And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

Here is, 1. The observations which the spies made upon the city of Laish, and the posture of its inhabitants, *ver. 7.* Never was place so ill governed, and so ill guarded, which would make it a very easy prey to the invader. (1.) It was ill governed, for every man might be as bad as he would, and there was *no magistrate*, no *heir of restraint*, as the word is; that might so much as put *them to shame in any thing*, much less put *them to death*; so that by the most impudent immoralities they provoked God's wrath, and by all manner of mutual mischiefs, weakened and consumed one another. See here, 1. What the office of magistrates is, they are to be *heirs of restraint*, i. e. to preserve a constant entail of power, as heirs to an inheritance, in the places where they are, for the restraining of that which is evil. They are *possessors of restraint*, intrusted with their authority, for this end that they may check and suppress every thing that is vicious, and be *a terror to evil doers*. It is only God's grace that can renew mens ill minds, and turn their hearts, but the magistrates power may restrain their ill practices, and tie their hands, so that the wickedness of the wicked, may not be either so injurious, or so infectious, as otherwise it would be. Tho' the sword of justice cannot cut up the *root of bitterness*, it may cut off its branches, and hinder its growth and spreading; that vice may not go without check, for then it becomes daring and dangerous, and the community shares in the guilt. 2. See what method must be used for the restraint of wickedness: Sinners must be put to shame, that they who will not be restrained by the shamefulness of the sin before God and their own consciences, may be restrained by the shamefulness of the punishment before men. All ways must be tried to dash sin out of countenance, and put it in an ill name, to make people ashamed of their idleness, drunkenness, cheating, lying, and other sins, by making reputation always appear on virtue's side. 3. See how miserable and how near to ruin those places are, that either have no magistrates, or none that bear the sword to any purpose; the wicked then *walk on every side*, Psal. xii. 8. And how happy we are in good laws, and a good government. (2.) It was ill guarded. The people of Laish dwelt careless, quiet, and secure, their gates left open, their walls out of repair, because no apprehension of danger any way, tho' their wickedness was so great that they had reason to fear divine vengeance every day. It was a sign the Israelites, through their sloth and cowardise, were not now such a terror to the Canaanites, as they had been when they first came among them, else the city of Laish, which probably knew it self to be assigned to them, would not have been so very secure. Tho' they were an open and inland town, they *lived secure, like the Zidonians*, who were surrounded with the sea, and were well fortified both by art and nature, but were *far from the Zidonians*, who therefore could not come in to their assistance, nor help to defend them from the danger, which by debauching their manners they had helped to bring them into. And lastly, they had *no business with any man*, which speaks either the idleness they affected, they followed no trade, and so grew lazy and luxurious, and utterly unable to defend themselves. Or the independency they affected, they scorned to be either in subjection to, or alliance with, any of their neighbours, and so they had none to protect them, or bring in any aid to them. They cared for no body, and therefore no body cared for them. Such as these were the men of Laish.

2. The encouragement which from hence they gave to their countrymen that sent them, to prosecute their design upon this city, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* Probably, the Danites had formed notions of the insuperable difficulties of the enterprize, thought it impossible ever to make themselves masters of Laish, and therefore had kept themselves so long out of the possession of it, perhaps suggesting likewise to one another in their unbelief, that it was not a country worth going so far, and running such a risk for. Which jealousies the spies, (and they were not in this evil spies) had an eye to in their report. (1.) They represent the place as desirable. If you will trust our judgments, *we have seen the land*, and we are

agreed

agreed in our verdict upon the view, that behold *it is very good*, ver. 9. better than this mountainous country, into which we are here crowded by the Philistines. You need not doubt of living comfortably in it, for it is a place *where there is no want of any thing*, ver. 10. See what a good land Canaan was, that this city which lay furthest of all northward, in the utmost corner of the country, stood on such a fruitful spot. (2.) They represent it as attainable, they do not at all question, but, with God's blessing, they may soon get possession of it; for *the people are secure*, ver. 10. And the more secure, always the less safe; God *has given it into your hands*, and you may have it for the taking. They stir them up to the undertaking, *arise that we may go up against them*, let us go about it speedily and resolutely: expostulate with them for their delays, and chide them out of their sluggishness; *are ye still? be not slothful to go*. Men need to be thus stirred up to mind even their interest. Heaven is a *very good land, where there is no want of any thing*, our God has by the promise *given it into our hands*, let us not be slothful then in making it sure, and *laying hold on eternal life*, but *strive to enter*.

3. The Danites expedition against Laish. This particular family of them, to whose lot that city fell, now at length make towards it, ver. 11, 12, 13. The military men were but six hundred in all, not a hundredth part of that tribe, for when they entered Canaan the Danites were above sixty four thousand, *Numb. xxvi. 43*. It was strange that none of their brethren of their own tribe, much less of any other, came in to their assistance; but it was long after Israel came to Canaan, before there appeared among them any thing of a publick spirit, or concern for a common interest, which was the reason they seldom united in a common head, and that kept them low and inconsiderable. It appears, by ver. 21. that these six hundred were the whole number that went to plant there, for they had their families and effects with them, their *little ones, and cattle*, so confident were they of success. The other tribes gave them a free passage through their country; their first day's march brought them near Kirjath-jearim, ver. 12. and such rare things were military encampments now become in Israel, that the place where they rested that night was from thence called Mahaneh-dan, the camp of Dan, and probably the place whence they began their march between Zorah and Eshtaol, was called by the same name, and is meant, *chap. xiii. 25*. The second day's march brought them into mount Ephraim, near Micah's house, ver. 13. and there we must pause a while.

14. ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do. 15. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17. And the five men that went to spy out the land, went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18. And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19. And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20. And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones, and the cattle, and the carriage before them. 22. ¶ And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house, were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23. And they cried unto the children of Dan: and they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24. And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is this* that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? 25. And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

The Danites had sent out their spies to find out a country for them, and they sped well in their search; but here now they came

to the place (for till that brought it to their mind, it doth not appear that they had mentioned it to their brethren) they oblige them with a further discovery; they can tell them where there are gods, here in *these houses*, there is an ephod and teraphim, and a great many fine things for devotion, such as we have not the like in our country, *now therefore consider what you have to do*, ver. 14. We consulted them, and had a good answer from them; they are worth having; nay, they are worth stealing (that is having upon the worst terms) and if we can but make our selves masters of these gods, we may the better hope to prosper, and make our selves masters of Laish. So far they were in the right, that it was desirable to have God's presence with them, but wretchedly mistaken, when they took these images for tokens of God's presence, which were fitter to be used in a puppet-play, than in acts of devotion. They thought an oracle would be pretty company for them in their enterprize, and instead of a council of war to advise upon every emergency; and the place they were going to settle in, being so far from Shiloh, they thought they had more need of a *house of gods* among themselves, than Micah had that lived so near it. They might have made as good an ephod and teraphim themselves as this was, and which would have served their purpose every whit as well, but the reputation which they found this in the possession of (tho' it had had that reputation but a while) amused them into a mighty value and veneration for it, which they would soon have dropped, if they had had so much sense as to enquire into its original, and whether there were any thing divine in its institution.

Being determined to take these gods along with them, we are here told how they stole the images, cajoled the priest, and frightened Micah from attempting to rescue them.

1. The five men that knew the house, and the avenues to it, and particularly the chapel, went in and fetched out the images, with the ephod, and teraphim, and all the appurtenances, while the six hundred men kept the priest in talk at the gate, ver. 16, 17, 18. See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods, while he was santring at the gate, and gazing at the strangers, his treasure (such as it was) was gone. See how impotent these sorry gods were that could not keep themselves from being stolen; it is mentioned as the reproach of idols, that *themselves are gone into captivity*, Isa. xlii. 2. O the sottishness of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them, that could not keep themselves from being stolen? Yet because they went by the name of gods, as if it were not enough that they had with them the presence of the invisible God, nor that they stood in relation to the tabernacle, where there were even visible tokens of his presence, nothing will serve them but they must have *gods to go before them*, not of their own making indeed, but which was as bad, of their own stealing. Their idolatry began in theft, a proper prologue for such an opera. In order to the breaking of the second commandment, they begin with the eighth, and take their neighbour's goods to make them their gods. The holy God *bates robbery for burnt-offerings*, but the devil loves it. Had these Danites seized the images to deface them, and abolish them, and the priest to punish him, they had done like Israelites indeed, and had appeared jealous for their God, as their fathers had done, *Josh. xxii. 16*. but to take them for their own use, was such a complicated crime, as shewed they neither feared God, nor regarded man, but were perfectly lost, both to godliness and honesty.

2. They set upon the priest, and flattered him into a good humour, not only to let the gods go, but to go himself along with them; for without him they knew not well how to make use of the gods. Observe, 1. How they tempted him, ver. 19. They assured him of better preferment with them than what he now had. It would be more honour and profit to be chaplain to a regiment, (for they were no more, tho' they call themselves a tribe) than to be only a domestick chaplain to a private gentleman. Let him go with them, and he shall have more dependents on him, more sacrifices brought to his altar, and more fees for consulting his teraphim than he had here. 2. How they won him. A little persuasion served, *his heart was glad*, ver. 20. The proposal took well enough with his rambling fancy, which would never let him stay long at a place, and gratified his covetousness and ambition. He had no reason to say, but that he was well where he was, Micah had not *deceived him, or changed his wages*, he was not moved with any remorse of conscience for attending on a graven image; had he gone away to Shiloh to minister to the Lord's priests, according to the duty of a Levite, he might have been welcome there, (*Deut. xviii. 6*.) and his remove had been commendable, but instead of that he takes the images with him, and carries the infection of the idolatry into a whole city. It had been very unjust and ungrateful to Micah, if he had only gone away himself, but much more so to take the images along with him, which he knew the heart of Micah was set upon. Yet better could not be expected from a treacherous Levite; what house can be sure of him who hath forsaken the house of the Lord? Or what friend will he be true to that has been false to his God? He could not pretend that he was under a force, for he was *glad in his heart to go*. If ten shekels won him (as bishop Hall expresseth it) eleven would lose him; for what can hold those that have made shipwreck of a good conscience. *The hireling flees because he is a hireling*. The priest and his gods

gods went in *the midst of the people*, there they placed him, that they might secure him, either from going back himself, if his mind should change, or from being fetched back by Micah, or perhaps in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests went in the midst of their camp.

3. They frightened Micah back, when he pursued them to recover his gods. As soon as ever he perceived that his chapel was plundered, and his chaplain had out-run him, he mustered all the force he could make, and pursued the robbers, *ver. 22.* His neighbours, and perhaps tenants that used to join with him in his devotions, were forward to help him on this occasion; they got together and pursued the robbers, who having their children and cattle before them, *ver. 21.* could make no great haste, so that they soon overtook them, hoping by strength of reason to recover what was stolen, for the disproportion of their numbers was such, that they could not hope to do it by strength of arm. The pursuers called after them, desiring to speak a word with them, they in the rear, (where it is probable they posted the fiercest and strongest of their company, expecting there to be attacked) turned about, and asked Micah what ailed him to be so much concerned, and what he would have? *ver. 23.* He argues with them, and pleads his right, which he thought should prevail, but they in answer plead their might, which it proved did prevail; for it is common that might overcomes right.

1. He insists upon the wrong they had certainly done him, *ver. 24.* *Ye have taken away my gods*, my images of God, which I have an incontestible title to, for I made them myself, and which I have such an affection for, that I am undone if I lose them, for what have I more that will do me any good if these be gone? Now, (1.) This discovers to us the folly of Idolaters, and the power that Satan has over them. What a folly was it for him to call those his gods which he had made, when he only is to be worshipped by us as a God that made us; folly indeed to set his heart upon such silly idle things, and to look upon himself as undone when he had lost them. (2.) This may discover to us our spiritual idolatry, that creature which we place our happiness in, which we set our affections inordinately upon, and which we can by no means find in our hearts to part with, of which we say, what have we more? That we make an idol of. That is put in God's place, and is an usurper which we are concerned about, as if our life and comfort, our hope and happiness, and all were bound up in it. But, (3.) If all people will thus walk in the name of their God, shall we not be in like manner affected towards our God, the true God? Let us reckon the having an interest in God, and communion with him incomparably the richest having, and the loss of God the forest loss, wo unto us if he depart, for what have we more? Deserting souls that are lamenting after the Lord, may well admire, as Micah did, you should ask, what ails them? For the tokens of God's favour are suspended, his comforts are withdrawn, and what have they more?

2. They insist upon the mischief they would certainly do him, if he prosecuted his demand. They would not hear reason, nor do justice, nor would so much as offer to pay him the prime cost he had been at upon those images, nor promise to make restitution of what they had taken, when they had served their present purpose with them in this expedition, and had time to copy them, and make others like them for themselves, much less had they any compassion for a loss he so bitterly lamented, they would not so much as speak him fair, or give him good words, but resolve to justify their robbery with murder, if he did not immediately let fall his claims, *ver. 25.* Take heed, *left angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life*, and that is worse than losing thy gods. Wicked and unreasonable men reckon it a great provocation to be asked to do justice, and support themselves by their power against right and reason. Micah's crime is asking his own, yet for this he is in danger to lose his life, and the life of his household. Micah has not courage enough to venture his life for the rescue of his gods, so little opinion had he of their being able to protect him, and bear him out, and therefore tamely gives them up, *ver. 26.* *He turned and went back to his house*; and if the loss of his idols did but convince him (as one would think it should) of their vanity and impotency, and his own folly in setting his heart upon them, and send him back to the true God, from whom he had revolted, he that lost them had a much better bargain, than they that by force of arms carried them off. If the loss of our idols cure us of the love of them, and make us say, *what have we to do with any more idols?* The loss will be unspeakable gain, see *Isa. ii. 20.—xxx. 22.*

27. And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet, and secure; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob: and they built a city and dwelt therein. 29. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan

their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit, the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30. ¶ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan the son of Gerthom, the son of Manasseh; he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land. 31. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made; all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

Here is, 1. Laish conquered by the Danites. They proceeded on their march, and because they met with no disaster, perhaps concluded they had done no ill in robbing Micah, many justify themselves in their impiety by their prosperity. Observe, 1. What posture they found the people of Laish in, both those of the city, and those of the country about, they were at quiet and secure, not jealous of the five spies that had been among them to search out the land, nor had they any intelligence of the approach of this enemy, which made them a very easy prey to this little handful of men that came upon them, *ver. 27.* Note, Many are brought to destruction by their security. Satan gets advantage against us when we are careless, and off our watch; happy therefore is the man that feareth always. 2. What a complete victory they obtained over them, they put all the people to the sword, and burnt down so much of the city as they thought fit to rebuild, *ver. 27, 28.* and for ought appears herein they met with no resistance: for the measure of the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, that of the Danites was but beginning to fill. (3.) How the conquerors settled themselves in their room, *ver. 28, 29.* They built the city, or much of it anew, the old buildings being gone to decay, and called the name of it Dan, to be a witness for them that they were Danites by birth, tho' separated so far off from their brethren, which hereafter, by reason of their distance might be called in question. We are concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore must take all occasions to own it, and preserve the remembrance of it to ours after us.

2. Idolatry immediately set up there. God had graciously performed his promise, in putting them in possession of that which fell to their lot, obliging them thereby to be faithful to him, who had been so to them, they inherited the labour of the people, that they might observe his statutes, *Psal. cv. 44, 45.* But the first thing they do after they are settled, is to break his statutes; as soon as they began to settle themselves, they set up the graven image, *ver. 30.* perversely attributing their success to that idol, which if God had not been infinitely patient, would have been their ruin. Thus a prosperous idolater goes on to offend, *imputing this his power unto his god*, *Hab. i. 11.* Their Levite, who officiated as priest, is at length named here, Jonathan, the son of Gerthom, the son of Manasseh. The word Manasseh, in the original has the letter Nun set over the head, which some of the Jewish rabbins say, is an intimation that it should be left out, and then Manasseh will be Moses, and this Levite, they say was grandson to the famous Moses, who indeed had a son, named Gerthom; but that the historian, in honour of Moses, by a half interposition of that letter, turned the name into Manasseh. The vulgar Latin reads it Moses. And if indeed Moses had a grandson that was rakish, and was picked up as a fit tool to be made use of in the setting up of idolatry, it is not the only instance (would to God it were!) of the unhappy degenerating of the posterity of great and good men. Children's children are not always the crown of old men. But the learned bishop Patrick takes this to be an idle conceit of the rabbins, and supposeth this Jonathan to be of some other family of the Levites. How long these corruptions continued, we are told in the close. (1.) That the posterity of this Jonathan continued to act as priests to this family of Dan, that was seated at Laish, and in the country about till the captivity, *ver. 30.* After Micah's image was removed, that family retained the character of priests, and had respect paid them as such by that city, and it is very probable Jeroboam had an eye to them, when he set up one of his calves there, which they would welcome at Dan, and put some reputation upon, when the priests of the Lord would have nothing to do with them, and that his family officiated as some of his priests. (2.) That these images continued till Samuel's time, for so long the ark of God was at Shiloh, and, it is probable, in his time effectual care was taken to suppress and abolish this idolatry. See how dangerous it is to admit an infection, for spiritual distempers are not so soon cured as caught.

C H A P. XIX.

The three remaining chapters of this book, contain a most tragical story of the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, patronized by the tribe of Benjamin, for which that tribe was severely chastised, and almost entirely cut off by the rest of the tribes. This seems to have been done, not long after the death of Joshua, for it was when there was no king, no judge in Israel, *ver. 1.* and chap. xxi. 25. and Phinehas was then high-priest, chap. xx. 28. These particular iniquities, the Danites idolatry, and the Benjamites immorality let in that general apostasy, *Judg. iii. 7.* The abuse

abuse of the Levite's concubine is here very particularly related. (1.) *Her adulterous elopement from him, ver. 1, 2.* (2.) *His reconciliation to her, and the journey he took to fetch her home, ver. 3.* (3.) *Her father's kind entertainment of him, ver. 4—9.* (4.) *The abuses he met with at Gibeah, where being benighted he was forced to take up.* 1. *He was neglected by the men of Gibeah, ver. 10—15.* and entertained by an Ephraimite that sojourned among them, ver. 16—21. 2. *They set upon him in his quarters, as the Sodomites did on Lot's guests, ver. 22—24.* 3. *They villainously forced his concubine to death, ver. 25—28.* (5.) *The course he took to send notice of this to all the tribes of Israel, ver. 29, 30.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. 2. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months. 3. And her husband arose and went after her to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house, and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. 4. And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him, and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there. 5. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way. 6. And they sat down and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry. 7. And when the man arose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again. 8. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them. 9. And when the man rose up to depart, he and his concubine, and his servant; his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth towards evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. 10. But the man would not tarry that night, but he arose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, (which is Jerusalem) and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him. 11. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent, and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in unto this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. 12. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah. 13. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah. 14. And they passed on, and went their way, and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin. 15. And they turned aside thither to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging.

The domestick affairs of this Levite would not have been related thus largely, but to make way for the following story of the injuries done him, in which the whole nation interested themselves. Bishop Hall's first remark upon this story, is, *that there is no complaint of a publicly ordered state, but there is a Levite at one end of it, either as an agent, or as a patient.* In Micah's idolatry, a Levite was active; in the wickedness of Gibeah, a Levite was passive; *no tribe shall sooner feel the want of government than that of Levi*; and in all the book of Judges, no mention is made of any of that tribe, but of these two. This Levite was of mount Ephraim, ver. 1. He married a wife of Bethlehem-judah, she is called his concubine, because she was not endowed, for perhaps he had nothing to endow her with, being himself a sojourner, and not settled, but it doth not appear that he had any other wife, and the margin calls her a wife, a concubine, ver. 1. She came from the same city that Micah's Levite came from, as if Beth-

lehem-judah owed a double ill turn to mount Ephraim, for she was as bad for a Levite's wife, as that other for a Levite.

1. This Levite's concubine played the whore, and out-run her husband, ver. 2. The Chaldee reads it, only that she carried it insolently to him, or despised him, and being displeased at it, she went away from him, and (which was not fair) was received and entertained at her father's house. Had her husband turned her out of doors unjustly, her father ought to have pitied her affliction, but when she treacherously departed from her husband, to embrace the bosom of a stranger, her father ought not to have countenanced her sin. Perhaps she would not have out-run her duty to her husband, if she had not known too well where she should be kindly received. Children's ruin is often owing very much to parents indulgence.

2. The Levite went himself to court her return. It was a sign there was no king, no judge in Israel, else she had been prosecuted and put to death, as an adulteress, but instead of that she is addressed to in the best manner by her injured husband, who takes a long journey on purpose to beseech her to be reconciled, ver. 3. If he had put her away, it had been a crime in him to return to her again, Jer. iii. 1. But she having gone away, it was a virtue in him to forgive the offence, and tho' the party wronged, yet to make the first motion to her to be friends again. It is part of the character of the wisdom from above, that it is gentle and easy to be intreated. He spake friendly to her, or comfortably, for so the Hebrew phrase of speaking to the heart commonly signifies; which intimates that she was in sorrow, penitent for what she had done amiss, which probably he heard of when he came to fetch her back. Thus God promiseth concerning adulterous Israel, Hos. ii. 14. *I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.*

3. Her father bid him very welcome, and by his extraordinary kindness to him, endeavoured to atone for the countenance he had given his daughter, in withdrawing from him, and to confirm him in his disposition to be reconciled to her. (1.) He entertains him kindly. *Rejoiceth to see him*, ver. 3. treats him generously for three days, ver. 4. And the Levite, to shew that he was perfectly reconciled, accepted his kindness, and we do not find that he upbraided him or his daughter, with what had been amiss, but was as easy and pleasant, as at his first wedding-feast. It becomes all, but especially Levites, to forgive as God doth. Every thing among them gave a hopeful prospect of their living comfortably together for the future, but could they have foreseen what befel them within one day or two, how would all their mirth have been embittered, and turned into mourning! When the affairs of our families are in the best posture, we ought to rejoice with trembling, because we know not what troubles one day may bring forth. We cannot foresee what evil is near us, but we ought to consider what may be, that we may not be secure, as if to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, Isa. lvi. 12. (2.) He is very earnest for his stay, as a further demonstration of his hearty welcome, the affection he had for him, and the pleasure he took in his company, is out of a civil regard to him as his son-in-law, and an ingrafted branch of his own house. Note, There is love and duty owing to those we are by marriage related to, as well as those that are bone of our bone. And they that shew kindness as this Levite did, may expect as he did to receive kindness. And, 2. Out of a pious respect to him as a Levite, a servant of God's house; if he were such a Levite as he should be (and nothing appears to the contrary) he is to be commended for courting his stay, finding his converse profitable, and having opportunity to learn from him the good knowledge of the Lord; hoping also that the Lord will do him good, because he has a Levite to be his son-in-law, and will bless him for his sake. 1. He forceth him to stay the fourth day, and that was kind, not knowing when they might be together again, he engageth him to stay as long as possible he could. The Levite, tho' nobly treated, was very urgent to be gone, a good man's heart is where is business is, for as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is the man that wanders from his place. It is a sign a man has either little to do at home, or little heart to what he has to do, that can take a pleasure in being long abroad where he has nothing to do. It is especially good to see a Levite willing to go home to his few sheep in the wilderness. Yet this Levite was overcome by importunity and kind management to stay longer than he intended, ver. 5, 6, 7. We ought to avoid the extremity of an over easy yielding to the neglect of our duty on the one hand, and that of moroseness and wilfulness to the neglect of our friends, and their kindness on the other hand. Our Saviour after his resurrection, was prevailed upon to stay with his friends longer than he at first intimated his purpose, Luke xxiv. 28, 29. 2. He forceth him to stay till afternoon the fifth day, and that, as it proved, was unkind, ver. 8, 9. He would by no means let him go before dinner, promiseth him he shall have dinner early, designing thereby, as he had done the day before, to detain him another night, but the Levite designed for the house of the Lord at Shiloh, ver. 18. and was impatient to get thither, and therefore would stay no longer. Had they set out early they might have reached to some better lodging-place than that which they were now constrained to take up with, nay, they might have got to Shiloh. Note, Our friends designed kindnesses, often prove in the event real injuries; what is meant for

for our welfare becomes a trap. *Who knows what is good for a man in this life?* The Levite was unwise in setting out so late, he might have got home better if he had staid a night longer, and taken the day before him.

4. In his return home he was forced to lodge at Gibeah, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, afterwards called Gibeah of Saul, which lay in his road towards Shiloh, and mount Ephraim. When it drew towards night, and the shadows of the evening were stretched out, they began to think (as it concerns us to do when we observe the day of our life hastning towards a period) where they must lodge. When night came, they could not pursue their journey; *he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goes*; they could not but desire rest, for which the night was intended, as the day for labour. (1.) The servant proposed that they should lodge in Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, but as yet in the possession of the Jebusites, come (saith the servant) let us lodge in this city of the Jebusites, *ver. 11*. And if they had done so, it is probable they had had much better usage than they met with in Gibeah of Benjamin. Debauched and profligate Israelites are worse, and much more dangerous than Canaanites themselves. But the master, as became one of God's tribe, would by no means quarter, no, not one night in a city of strangers, *ver. 12*. not because he questioned his safety among them, but he was not willing, if he could possibly avoid it, to have so much intimacy and familiarity with them as a night's lodging came to, nor to be so much beholden to them. By shunning this place he would witness against the wickedness of those that contracted friendship and familiarity with those devoted nations. Let Israelites, Levites especially, associate with Israelites, and not with the *sons of the stranger*. (2.) Having passed by Jebus, which was about five or six miles from Bethlehem, the place whence they came, and not having day-light to bring them to Ramah, they took up at Gibeah, *ver. 13, 14, 15*. there they sat down in the street, no body offering them a lodging. In these countries at that time there were no inns, or publick-houses, in which, as with us, travellers might have entertainment for their money, but they carried entertainment along with them, as this Levite did here, *ver. 19*. and depended upon the courtesy and hospitality of the inhabitants for a lodging. Let us take occasion from hence, when we are in journies, to thank God for this among other conveniencies of travelling, that there are inns to entertain strangers, and in which they may be welcome, and well accommodated for their money. Surely there is no country in the world, wherein one may stay at home with more satisfaction, or go abroad with more comfort, than in our own nation. This traveller, tho' a Levite, (and to those of that tribe God had particularly commanded his people to be kind upon all occasions) met with very cold entertainment at Gibeah, *no man took them into his house*, if they had any reason to think he was a Levite, perhaps that made those ill people the more shy of him. There are those who will have this laid to their charge at the great day, *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in*.

16. ¶ And behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah, but the men of the place *were* Benjamites. 17. And when he had lift up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? 18. And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Beth-lehem-judah, toward the side of mount Ephraim, from thence *am* I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I *am now* going to the house of the LORD, and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me and for my handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing. 20. And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever, *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me, only lodge not in the street. 21. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

Tho' there was none of Gibeah, yet it proved there was one in Gibeah that shewed some civility to this distressed Levite, who was glad that any one took notice of him. It was strange that some of those wicked people, that when it was dark designed so ill to him and his concubine, did not under pretence of kindness invite them in, that they might have a fairer opportunity of perpetrating their villainy, but either they had not wit enough to be so designing, or not wickedness enough to be so deceiving: Or, perhaps, none of them separately thought of such a wickedness, till in the black and dark night they got together to contrive what mischief they should do. Ill people in confederacy make one another much worse than any of them would be by themselves. When the Levite and his wife, and servant, were beginning to fear that they must lie in the street all night (and as good have lain in a den of lions) they were at length invited into a house. And we are here told,

No. xix.

1. Who that kind man was that invited them. (1.) He was a man of mount Ephraim, and only sojourned in Gibeah, *ver. 16*. Of all the tribes of Israel, the Benjamites had most reason to be kind to poor travellers, for their ancestor, Benjamin, was born upon the road, his mother then upon a journey, and very near to this place, *Gen. xxxv. 16, 17*. Yet they were hard-hearted to a traveller in distress, while an honest Ephraimite had compassion on him, and, no doubt, was the more kind to him, when upon enquiry he found that he was his countryman, of mount Ephraim likewise. He that was himself but a sojourner in Gibeah, was the more compassionate to a way-faring man, for he *knew the heart of a stranger*, *Deut. x. 19*. Good people that look upon themselves but as strangers and sojourners in this world, should for this reason be tender one of another, because they all belong to the same better country, and are not at home here. (2.) He was an old man, one that retained some of the expiring virtue of an Israelite; the rising generation was entirely corrupted, if there were any good remaining among them, it was only with those that were old and going off. (3.) He was coming home from his work out of the field at even. The evening calls home labourers, *Psal. civ. 23*. But it should seem this was the only labourer that this evening brought home to Gibeah. The rest had given up themselves to sloth and luxury, and no marvel there was among them, as in Sodom, *abundance of uncleanness*, when there was among them, as in Sodom, *abundance of idleness*, *Ezek. xvi. 49*. But he that was honestly diligent in his business all day, was disposed to be generously hospitable to these poor strangers at night. Let men labour that they may have to give, *Eph. iv. 28*. It appears by *ver. 21*. that he was a man of some substance, and yet had been himself at work in the field. No man's estate will privilege him in idleness.

2. How free and generous he was in his invitation, he did not stay till they applied themselves to him, to beg for a night's lodging, but when he saw them, *ver. 17*. enquired into their circumstances, and prevented them with his kindness; thus our good God doth, answers before we call. Note, A charitable disposition expects only opportunity, not importunity to do good, and will succour upon sight, unsought unto. Hence we read of a *bountiful eye*, *Prov. xxii. 9*. If Gibeah was like Sodom, this old man was like Lot in Sodom, who *sat in the gate* to invite strangers. *Gen. xix. 1*. Thus *Job opened his doors to the travellers*, and would not suffer him to lodge in the street, *Job xxxi. 32*. Observe, (1.) How ready he was to give credit to the Levite's account of himself, when he saw no reason at all to question the truth of it. Charity is not apt to distrust, but *hopeth all things*, *1 Cor. xiii. 7*. and will not make use of Nabal's excuse for his churlishness to David, *many servants now a-days break away from their masters*, *1 Sam. xxv. 10*. The Levite, in his account of himself, professeth, that he was now going to the house of the Lord, (*ver. 18*.) for there he designed to attend, either with a trespass-offering for the sins of his family, or with a peace-offering for the mercies of his family, or both, before he went to his own house. And if the men of Gibeah had any intimation of his being that way bound, probably they would not therefore entertain him, the Samaritans would not receive Christ, because his face was towards Jerusalem, *Luke ix. 53*. But for that reason, because he was a Levite, and was now going to the house of the Lord, this good old man was the more kind to him. Thus he received a disciple in the name of a disciple, a servant of God for his master's sake. (2.) How free he was to give him entertainment. The Levite was himself provided with all necessaries, *ver. 19*. wanted nothing but a lodging, but his generous host would be himself at the charge of his entertainment, *ver. 20*. Let all thy wants be upon me, so he brought him into his house, *ver. 21*. Thus God will some way or other raise up friends for his people and ministers, even when they seem forlorn.

22. ¶ Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. 23. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. 24. Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine, them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. 25. But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. 26. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the mans house, where her lord *was*, till it was light. 27. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and behold, the woman his concubine

concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold. 28. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going: but none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. 29. ¶ And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. 30. And it was so, that all that saw it, said, there was no such deed done nor seen, from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt, unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*.

Here is, 1. The great wickedness of the men of Gibeah, one could not imagine that ever it should enter into the heart of men that had the use of human reason, of Israelites that had the benefit of divine revelation, to be so very wicked, Lord, what is man! faith David, what a mean creature is he! Lord, what is man, may we say, upon the reading of this story, what a vile creature is he! when he is given up to his own heart's lusts? (1.) The finners are here called the sons of Belial, *i. e.* ungovernable men, men that would endure no yoke. Children of the Devil, for he is Belial, resembling him, and joining with him in rebellion against God and his government. Sons of Benjamin, of whom Moses had said, *the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him*, (Deut. xxxiii. 12.) are become such sons of Belial, that an honest man cannot lodge in safety among them. (2.) The sufferers were a Levite and his wife, and that kind man that gave them entertainment. We are strangers upon earth, and must expect strange usage. It is said *they were making their hearts merry*, when this trouble came upon them, *ver. 22*. If the mirth were innocent, it teaches us of what uncertain continuance all our creature-comforts and enjoyments are; when we are never so well pleased with our friends, we know not how near our enemies are; nor if it be well with us this hour, can we be sure it will be so the next. If the mirth were sinful and excessive, let it be a warning to us to keep a strict guard upon our selves, that we grow not intemperate in the use of lawful things nor be transported into indecencies by our cheerfulness, for *the end of that mirth is heaviness*. God can soon change the note of those that are making their hearts merry, and turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness.

Let us see what the wickedness of these Benjamites was.

1. They made a rude and insolent assault in the night, upon the habitation of an honest man, that not only lived peaceably among them, but kept a good house, and was a blessing and ornament to their city. They beset the house round, and, to the great terror of those within, beat as hard as they could at the door, *ver. 27*. A man's house is his castle, in which he ought to be both safe and quiet, and where there is law, it is taken under the special protection of it, but there was no king in Israel to keep the peace, and secure honest men from the sons of violence.

2. They had a particular spite at the strangers that were within their gates, that only desired a night's lodging among them, contrary to the laws of hospitality, which all civilized nations have accounted sacred, and which the master of the house pleaded with them, *ver. 23*. *Seeing that this man is come into my house*. They are base and abject spirits indeed that will trample upon the helpless, and use a man the worse for his being a stranger, whom they know no ill by.

3. They designed in the most filthy and abominable manner, (not to be thought of without horror and detestation) to abuse the Levite, whom perhaps they had observed to be young and comely. *Bring him forth that we may know him*. We should certainly have concluded they meant only to enquire whence he came, and to know his character, but that the good man of the house, who understood their meaning too well, by his answer, lets us know that they designed the gratification of that most unnatural, and worse than brutish, lust, which was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and called an *abomination*, Lev. xviii. 22. They, that are guilty of it, are ranked in the New-Testament among the worst and vilest of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 10. and such as *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Now, (1.) This was the sin of Sodom, and from thence is called Sodomy. The dead Sea, which was the standing monument of God's vengeance upon Sodom for its filthiness, was one of the boundaries of Canaan, and lay not many miles off from Gibeah, we may suppose the men of Gibeah had seen it many a time, and yet would not take warning by it, but did worse than Sodom, Ezek. xvi. 48. and sinned just *after the similitude of their transgression*. Who would have expected, (faith bishop Hall) such extream abomination to come out of the loins of Jacob? Even the worst pagans were fain to them. What did it avail them that they had the ark of God in Shiloh, when they had Sodom in their streets; God's law in their fringes, but the devil in their hearts; nothing but hell itself can yield a worse creature than a depraved Israelite. (2.) This was the punishment of their idolatry, that sin to which they were, above all other, most addicted. Because they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, therefore he gave them up to these

vile affections, by which they dishonoured themselves, as they had by their idolatry dishonoured him; and turned his glory into shame, Rom. i. 24, 28. See and admire in this instance the patience of God; why were not these sons of Belial struck blind, as the Sodomites were? Why was not fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon their city? It was because God would leave it to Israel to punish them by the sword, and would reserve his own punishment of them for the future state, in which those that *go after strange flesh*, shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7.

4. They were deaf to the reproofs and reasonings of the good man of the house, who being well acquainted (we may suppose) with the story of Lot and the Sodomites, seeing the men of this city imitate the Sodomites, set himself to imitate Lot, *ver. 23, 24*. Compare Gen. xix. 6, 7, 8. He went out to them as Lot did, spoke them fair, called them brethren, begged of them to desist, pleaded the protection of his house which his guests were under, represented to them the great wickedness of their attempt, do not so wickedly, so very wickedly, calls it folly, and a vile thing. But in one thing he conformed too far to Lot's example, (as we are apt in imitating good men to follow them, even in their false steps) in offering them his daughter to do what they would with. He had not power thus to prostitute his daughter, nor ought he to have done this evil, that good might come. But this wicked proposal of his may be in part excused from the great surprize and terror he was in, his mighty concern for his guests, and his having too close a regard to what Lot did in the like case, especially not finding that the angels, who were by, reproved him for it. And perhaps he hoped that his mentioning of this as a more natural gratification of their lust, would have sent them back to their common whores. But *they would not hearken to him*, *ver. 25*. Headstrong lusts are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, they fear the conscience and make it insensible.

5. They got the Levite's wife among them, and abused her to death, *ver. 25*. They slighted the old man's offer of his daughter to their lust, either because she was not handsome, or because they knew her to be one of great gravity and modesty; but when the Levite brought them his concubine, they took her with them by force to the place appointed for their filthiness. Josephus, in his narrative of this story, makes her to be the person they had a design upon when they beset the house, and faith nothing of their villainous design upon the Levite himself. They saw her (he faith) in the street, when they came into the town, and were smitten with her beauty; and perhaps, tho' she was reconciled to her husband, her looks did not speak her to be one of the most modest; many bring mischief of this kind upon themselves by their loose carriage and behaviour, a little spark may kindle a great fire. One would think the Levite should have followed them to see what became of his wife, but it is probable he durst not, for fear they would do him a mischief. In the miserable end of this woman, we may see the righteous hand of God punishing her former uncleanness, when she played the whore against her husband, *ver. 12*. Tho' her father had countenanced her, and her husband had forgiven her, and the fault was forgotten now the quarrel was made up, yet God remembred it against her, when he suffered these wicked men thus wretchedly to abuse her; in doing which, how unrighteous soever they were, in permitting it the Lord was righteous. Her punishment answered her sin, *culpa libido fuit, pena libido fuit*. By the law of Moses she was to have been put to death for her adultery, she escaped that punishment from men, yet vengeance pursued her; for if there was no king in Israel, yet there was a God in Israel, a God that judgeth in the earth. We must not think it enough to make our peace with men, whom by our sins we have wronged, but are concerned by repentance and faith to make our peace with God, who sees not as men sees, nor makes so light of sin, as men often do. The justice of God in this matter, doth not at all extenuate the horrid wickedness of those men of Gibeah, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

2. The notice that was sent of this wickedness to all the tribes of Israel. The poor abused woman made towards her husband's lodgings, as soon as ever the approach of the day-light obliged these sons of Belial to let her go, (for those works of darkness hate and dread the light) *ver. 25*. Down she fell at the door, with her hands on the threshold, begging pardon (as it were) for her former transgression, and in that posture of a penitent, with her mouth in the dust, she expired; there he found her, *ver. 26, 27*. supposed her asleep, or overcome with shame and confusion for what had happened, but soon perceived she was dead, *ver. 28*. took up her dead body, which we may suppose had all over it marks of the hands, the blows, and other abuses she had received. On this sad occasion he waved his purpose of going to Shiloh, and went directly home; he that went out in hopes to return rejoicing, came in again melancholy and disconsolate, sat down and considered, is this an injury fit to be passed by? He cannot call for fire from heaven to consume the men of Gibeah, as those angels did, who were after the same manner insulted by the Sodomites. There was no king in Israel, nor (for ought appears) any sanhedrin, or great council to appeal to, and demand justice from, Phineas is high-priest; but he attends closely to the business of the sanctuary, and will be no judge or divider; he has therefore no other way left him, but to appeal to the people, let the community

munity be judge; tho' they had no general stated assembly of all the tribes, yet it is probable each tribe had a meeting of their chiefs within itself; to each of the tribes, in their respective meetings, he sent by special messengers a remonstrance of the wrong that was done him, in all its aggravating circumstances, and with it a piece of his wife's dead body, *ver. 29.* both to confirm the truth of the story, and to affect them the more with it. He divided it into twelve pieces, according to the bones, so some read it, *i. e.* by the joints, sending one to each tribe, even to Benjamin among the rest, in hopes some among them would have been moved to join in punishing so great a villainy, and the more warmly, because committed by some of their own tribe. It did indeed look very barbarous, thus to mangle a dead body, which having been so wretchedly dishonoured, ought to have been decently interred, but the Levite designed hereby, (1.) To represent their barbarous usage of his wife, whom they had better have cut in pieces thus, than use as they did. (2.) To express his own passionate concern, and thereby to excite the like in them.

And it had the desired effect. All that saw the pieces of the dead body, and were told how the matter was, expressed the same sentiments upon it. (1.) That the men of Gibeah had been guilty of a very heinous piece of wickedness, the like to which had never been known before in Israel, *ver. 30.* It was a complicated crime, loaded and blackened with all possible aggravations. They were not such fools as to make a mock at this sin, or turn the story off with a jest. (2.) That a general assembly of all Israel should be called to debate what was fit to be done for the punishment of this wickedness, that a stop might be put to this threatening inundation of debauchery, and the wrath of God might not be poured upon the whole nation for it. It is not a common case, and therefore they stir up one another to come together upon the occasion with this, *consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.* We have here the three great rules, by which they that sit in council ought to go in every arduous affair. (1.) Let every man retire into himself, and weigh the matter impartially and fully in his own thoughts, and seriously and calmly consider it, without prejudice on either side, before he speaks to it. (2.) Let them freely talk it over, and every man take advice of his friend, know his opinion, with his reasons, and weigh them. (3.) Then let every man speak his mind, and give his vote according to his conscience. In multitude of such counsellors there is safety.

C H A P. XX.

*Into the book of the wars of the Lord the story of this chapter must be brought, but it looks as sad and uncomfortable as any article in all that history; for there is nothing in it that looks in the least bright or pleasant, but the pious zeal of Israel against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, which made it on their side a just and holy war, but otherwise the obstinacy of the Benjamites in protecting their criminals, which was the foundation of the war, the vast loss which the Israelites sustained in carrying on the war, and tho' the righteous cause was victorious at last, yet the issuing of the war, in the almost utter extirpation of the tribe of Benjamin, makes it from first to last melancholy. And yet this happened soon after the glorious settlement of Israel in the land of promise, upon which one would have expected every thing to be prosperous and serene. In this chapter we have, (1.) The Levite's cause heard in a general convention of the tribes, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) An unanimous resolve to avenge his quarrel upon the men of Gibeah, *ver. 8—11.* (3.) The Benjamites appearing in defence of the criminals, *ver. 12—17.* (4.) The defeat of Israel in the first and second days battle, *ver. 18—25.* (5.) Their humbling themselves before God upon that occasion, *ver. 26—28.* (6.) The total rout they gave the Benjamites in the third engagement, by a stratagem, by which they were all cut off, except six hundred men, *ver. 29—48.* And all this the effect of the indignities done to one poor Levite and his wife; so little do they that do iniquity, consider what will be in the end hereof.*

1. **T**HEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh. 2. And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. 3. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel; Tell us, how was this wickedness? 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine to lodge. 5. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. 6. And I took my concubine and cut

her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. 7. Behold, ye are all children of Israel, give here your advice and counsel. 8. ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house. 9. But now, this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah, we will go up by lot against it: 10. And we will take ten men of an hundred, throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people; that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man

Here is, 1. A general meeting of all the congregation of Israel, to examine the matter concerning the Levite's concubine, and to consider what was to be done upon it, *ver. 1, 2.* It doth not appear that they were summoned by the authority of any one common head, but they came together by the consent and agreement, as it were of one common heart, fired with a holy zeal for the honour of God and Israel. (1.) The place of their meeting was Mizpeh, they gathered together unto the Lord there; for Mizpeh was so very near to Shiloh, that their encampment might very well be supposed to reach from Mizpeh to Shiloh; Shiloh was a small town, and therefore when there was a general meeting of the people to present themselves before God, they chose Mizpeh for their head quarters, which was the next adjoining city of note; perhaps because they were not willing to give that trouble to Shiloh, which so great an assembly would occasion; it being the residence of the priests that attended the tabernacle. (2.) The persons that met were all Israel from Dan (the city very lately so called, *chap. xviii. 29.*) in the north to Beersheba, in the south with the land of Gilead, *i. e.* the tribes on the other side Jordan, all as one man, so unanimous were they in their concern for the publick good. Here was an assembly of the people of God, not a convocation of the Levites and priests, tho' a Levite was the person principally concerned in the cause, but an assembly of the people, to whom the Levite referred himself with an *appello populum*; the people of God were four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword, *i. e.* were armed and disciplined, and fit for service; and some of them perhaps, such as had known the wars of Canaan, *Judg. iii. 1.* In this assembly of all Israel, the chief (or corners) of the people, (for rulers are the corner stones of the people that keep all together) presented themselves as the representatives of the rest; they rendered themselves at their respective posts, at the head of the thousands and hundreds, the fifties and tens, over which they presided; for so much order and government, we may suppose at least they had among them, tho' they had no general, or commander in chief. So that here was, (1.) A general congress of the states for counsel, the chief of the people presented themselves, to lead and direct in this affair. (2.) A general rendezvous of the militia for action, all that drew sword, and were men of war, *ver. 17.* not hirelings, or pressed men, but the best freeholders, that went at their own charge. Israel was above six hundred thousand when they came into Canaan, and we have reason to think they were at this time much increased, rather than diminished, but then all between twenty and sixty were military men; now we may suppose more than the one half exempted from bearing arms, to husband the land; so that these were as the trained-bands. The militia of the two tribes and a half were forty thousand, *Josh. iv. 13.* but the tribes were many more.

2. Notice given to the tribe of Benjamin of this meeting, *ver. 3.* They heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh; probably they had legal summons sent them to appear with their brethren, that the cause might be fairly debated, before any resolutions were taken up upon it, and so the mischiefs that followed would have been happily prevented; but the notice they had of this meeting, rather hardened and exasperated them, than awakened them to think of the things that belonged to their peace and honour.

3. A solemn examination of the crime charged upon the men of Gibeah. A very horrid representation of it had been made by the report of the messengers that were sent to call them together, but it was fit it should be more closely inquired into, because such things are often made worse than really they were; a committee therefore was appointed to examine the witnesses (upon oath, no doubt) and to report the matter. It is only the testimony of the Levite himself that is here recorded, but it is probable his servant, and the old man were examined, and gave in their testimony, for that more than one were examined, appears by the original, *ver. 3.* which is, *tell ye us,* and the law was, that none should be put to death, much less so many upon the testimony of one witness only. The Levite gives a particular account of the matter. That he came into Gibeah only as a traveller, to lodge there, not giving the least umbrage of suspicion that he designed them

any ill turn, *ver. 4.* That the men of Gibeah, even those that were of substance among them, that should have been a protection to the stranger within their gates, riotously set upon the house where he lodged, *thought to have slain him*, he could not for shame relate the demand which they without shame made, *chap. xix. 22.* They declared their sin as Sodom, even the sin of Sodom, but his modesty would not suffer him to repeat it, it was sufficient to say they would have slain him, for he would rather have been slain than have submitted to their villainy; and if they had got him into their hands, they would have abused him to death; witness what they had done to his concubine, they have *forced her that that she is dead*, *ver. 5.* And to excite in his countrymen an indignation at this wickedness, he had sent pieces of the mangled body to all the tribes, which had fetched them together to bear their testimony against the *lewdness and folly committed in Israel*, *ver. 6.* All lewdness is folly, but especially lewdness in Israel, for them to defile their own bodies, who have the honourable seat of the covenant in their flesh; for them to defy the divine vengeance to whom it is so clearly revealed from heaven, Nabal is their name, and folly is with them. He concludes his declaration with an appeal to the judgment of the court, *ver. 7.* *Ye are all children of Israel*, and therefore ye know law and judgment, (*Eph. i. 13.*) Ye are a holy people to God, and have a dread of every thing which will dishonour God, and defile the land; ye are of the community, members of the same body, and therefore likely to feel from the distempers of it; ye are children of Israel, that ought to take particular care of the Levites, God's tribe among you, and therefore give here your advice and counsel, what is to be done.

4. The resolution they came to hereupon, which was, that now they were together they would not disperse till they had seen vengeance taken upon this wicked city, which was the reproach and scandal of their nation. Observe, (1.) Their zeal against the lewdness that was committed. They would not return to their houses, how much soever their families and their affairs at home wanted them, till they had vindicated the honour of God and Israel, and recovered with their swords, if it could not be had otherwise, that satisfaction for the crime which the justice of the nation called for, *ver. 8.* By this they shewed themselves children of Israel indeed, that they preferred the publick interests before their private concerns. (2.) Their prudence in sending out a considerable body of their forces to fetch provisions for the rest, *ver. 9, 10.* one of ten, and he chosen by lot, forty thousand in all must go to their respective countries, from whence they came, to fetch bread, and other necessaries for the subsistence of this great army; for when they came from home they took with them provisions only for a journey to Mizpeh, not for an encampment (which might prove long) before Gibeah. This was to prevent their scattering to forage for themselves, which if they had done, it would have been hard to get them all together again, especially all in so good a mind. Note, When there appears in people a pious zeal for any good work, it is best to strike while the iron is hot, for such zeal is apt to cool quickly, if the prosecution of it be delayed. Let it never be said, we left that good work to be done to-morrow, which we could as well have done to day. (3.) Their unanimity in these counsels, and the execution of them. The resolution was voted, *namine contradicente*, *ver. 8.* it was one and all; and when it was put in execution, they were *knit together as one man*, *ver. 11.* This was their glory and strength, that the several tribes had no separate interests when the common good was concerned.

12. ¶ And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? 13. Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: 14. But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities, unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. 15. And the children of Benjamin were numbred at that time out of the cities, twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbred seven hundred chosen men. 16. Among all this people, there were seven hundred chosen men, left-handed, every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss. 17. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbred four hundred thousand men that drew sword; all these were men of war.

Here is, 1. The fair and just demand which the tribes of Israel, now encamped, sent to the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver up the malefactors of Gibeah to justice, *ver. 12, 13.* If the tribe of Benjamin had come up, as they ought to have done to the assembly, and agreed with them in their resolutions, they had had none to deal with but the men of Gibeah only, but they by their ab-

fence, taking part with the criminals, application must be made to them all; the Israelites were zealous against the wickedness that was committed, yet they were discreet in their zeal, and did not think it would justify them in falling upon the whole tribe of Benjamin, unless they by refusing to give up the criminals, and protecting them against justice, should make themselves guilty, *ex post facto*. They desire them to consider how great the wickedness was that was committed, *ver. 12.* and that it was done among them; and how necessary it was therefore, that they should either punish the malefactors with death themselves, according to the law of Moses, or deliver them up to this general assembly, to be so much the more publickly and solemnly punished, that evil might be put away from Israel; the national guilt removed, the infection stopped by cutting off the gangrened part, and national judgments prevented; for the sin was so very like that of the Sodomites, that they might justly fear, if they did not punish it, God would rain hail from heaven upon them, as he did, not only upon Sodom, but the neighbouring cities. If the Israelites had not made this reasonable demand, they would have had much more reason to lament the following desolations of Benjamin. All methods of accommodation must be used before we go to war, or go to law. The demand was like that of Joab's to Abel, *2 Sam. xx. 20, 21.* Only deliver up the traitor, and we will lay down our arms. On these terms, and no other, God will be at peace with us, that we part with our sins, that we mortify and crucify our lusts, and then all shall be well; his anger will be turned away.

2. The wretched obstinacy and perverseness of the men of Benjamin, who seem to have been as unanimous and zealous in their resolutions to stand by the criminals, as the rest of the tribes were to punish them, so little sense had they of their honour, duty, and interest.

1. They were so prodigiously vile, as to patronize the wickedness that was committed. They would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, *ver. 13.* Either because they of that tribe were generally more vicious and debauched at this time than the rest of the tribes, and therefore would not bear to have that punished in others, which they knew themselves guilty of. Some of the most fruitful and pleasant parts of Canaan fell to the lot of this tribe, their land, like that of Sodom, was *as the garden of the Lord*, which perhaps helped to make the inhabitants, like the men of Sodom, wicked, and *sinners before the Lord exceedingly*, *Gen. xiii. 10, 13.* Or, because (as bishop Patrick suggests) they took it ill that the other tribes should meddle with the concerns of theirs; they would not do that which they knew was their duty, because they were minded of it by their brethren, by whom they scorned to be taught and controlled. If there were any wise men among them that would have complied with the demand made, yet they were overpowered by the majority, who thus made the crime of the men of Gibeah their own. Thus we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, if we say a confederacy with those that have, and make our selves guilty of other mens sins, by countenancing and defending them. It seems there is no cause so bad but it will find some patrons, some advocates to appear for it; but *we be to those by whom such offences come*. Those will have a great deal to answer for that obstruct the course of necessary justice, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, by saying, *O wicked man, thou shalt not die*.

2. They were so prodigiously vain and presumptuous, as to make head against the united force of all Israel. Sure never men were so wretchedly infatuated as they were, when they took up arms in opposition, (1.) To so good a cause as Israel had. How could they expect to prosper when they fought against justice, and consequently against the just God himself? against them that had the high-priest, and the divine oracle on their side, and so acted in down-right rebellion against the sacred and supreme authority of the nation. (2.) To so great a force as Israel had. The disproportion of their numbers was much greater than that, *Luke xiv. 31, 32.* Where he that had but ten thousand, durst not meet him that came against him with twenty thousand, and therefore desired conditions of peace. There the enemy was but two to one, here above fifteen to one, yet they despised conditions of peace. All the forces they could bring into the field was but twenty-six thousand men, besides seven hundred men of Gibeah, *ver. 15.* yet with these they will dare to face forty thousand men of Israel, *ver. 17.* Thus sinners are infatuated to their own ruin, and provoke him to jealousy, who is infinitely stronger than they, *1 Cor. x. 22.* But it should seem they depended upon the skill of their men, to make up what was wanting in numbers, especially a regiment of slingers, seven hundred men, who, tho' left-handed, were so dextrous at slinging stones, that they would not be a hair's breadth beside their mark, *ver. 16.* But these good marksmen were very much out in their aim, when they espoused this ill cause. Benjamin signifies the son of the right-hand, yet we find his posterity left-handed.

18. ¶ And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first. 19. And the children of Israel rose up in

in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day, twenty and two thousand men. 22. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array, in the place where they put themselves in array the first day. 23. (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother; And the LORD said, Go up against him.) 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. 25. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again, eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

We have here the defeat of the men of Israel in their first and second battle with the Benjamites.

1. Before their first engagement they asked counsel of God concerning the order of their battle, and were directed, and yet they were sorely beaten. They did not think it was proper to ask of God, whether they should go up at all against Benjamin, the case was plain enough, the men of Gibeah must be punished for their wickedness, and they must do it, or it will not be done; but who shall go first? *ver.* 18. that is, who shall be general of our army? For which soever tribe was appointed to go first, the prince of that tribe must be looked upon as commander in chief of the whole body; for if they had meant it of the order of their march only, it had been proper to have asked who shall go next, and then who next? But if they know that Judah must go first, they know they must all observe the orders of the prince of that tribe. This honour was done to Judah, because our Lord Jesus was to spring from that tribe, who was in all things to have the preeminence. The tribe that went up first had the most honourable post, but withal the most dangerous, and probably lost most in the engagement. Who would strive for precedency that sees the peril of it?

Yet tho' Judah, that strong and valiant tribe, goes up first, and all the tribes of Israel attend them, little Benjamin (so he is called, *Psal.* lxxviii. 27.) is too hard for them all. The whole army lays siege to Gibeah, *ver.* 19. The Benjamites advance to raise the siege, and the army prepares to give them a warm reception, *ver.* 20. Turns upon them to fight them, *ver.* 20. But between the Benjamites that attacked there in the front with incredible fury, and the men of Gibeah that sallied out upon their rear, they were put into confusion, and lost twenty-two thousand men, *ver.* 21. Here were no prisoners taken, for there was no quarter given, but all put to the sword.

2. Before the second engagement, they again *asked counsel of God*, and more solemnly than before, for they *wept before the Lord until even*, *ver.* 23. lamenting the loss of so many brave men, especially as it was a token of God's displeasure, and would give occasion to the Benjamites to triumph in the success of their wickedness. Also at this time they did not ask who should go up first? but whether they should go up at all? They intimate a reason, why they should scruple it, especially now providence had frowned upon them, because Benjamin was their brother; and a readiness to lay down their arms, if God should so order them. God bid them go up, he allowed the attempt; tho' Benjamin was their brother, he was a gangrened member of their body, and must be cut off. Upon this they encouraged themselves, perhaps more in their own strength, than in the divine commission, and made a second attempt upon the forces of the rebels, in the same place where the former battle was fought, *ver.* 22. in hopes to retrieve their credit upon the same spot of ground where they had lost it, which they would not superstitiously change, as if there were any thing unlucky in the place; but they were this second time repulsed, with the loss of eighteen thousand men, *ver.* 25. The former day's loss, and this, amounted to forty thousand, which was just a tenth part of the whole army, and the same number that they had drawn out by lot to fetch victuals, *ver.* 10. They decimated themselves for that service, and now God again decimated them for the slaughter.

But what shall we say to these things, that so just and honourable a cause should thus be put to the worst once and again? Were they not fighting God's battles against sin? Had they not his commission? what? and yet miscarry thus? 1. God's judgments are a great deep, and his way is in the sea. *Clouds and darkness are often round about him*, but *judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne*. We may be sure of the righteousness, when we cannot see the reasons of God's proceedings. 2. God would hereby shew them, and us in them, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*, that numbers are not to be confided in, which perhaps the Israelites did with too much assurance. We must never lay that weight on an arm of flesh, which the

rock of ages only will bear. 3. God designed hereby to correct Israel for their sins. They did well to shew such a zeal against the wickedness of Gibeah, but *were there not with them, even with them, sins against the Lord their God?* Those must be made to know their own iniquity, that are forward in condemning the iniquity of others. Some think it was a rebuke to them, for not witnessing against the idolatry of Micah, and the Danites, by which their religion was corrupted, as they now did against the lewdness of Gibeah and the Benjamites, by which the publick peace was disturbed, tho' God had particularly ordered them to levy war upon idolaters, *Deut.* xiii. 12. 4. God would hereby teach us, not to think it strange, if a good cause go by the worst for a while, nor to judge of the merits of it by the success of it. The interests of grace in the heart, and of religion in the world may be foiled, and suffer great loss, and seem to be quite run down, but judgment will be brought forth to victory at last. *Vincimur in prælio sed non in bello*. Right may fall, but it shall arise.

26. ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings before the LORD. 27. And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, 28. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. 29. And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah. 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times. 31. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city, and they began to smite of the people, and kill as at other times, in the high-ways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city, unto the high-ways. 33. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah. 34. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them. 35. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day, twenty and five thousand and an hundred men, all these drew the sword. 36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah. 37. And the liers in wait hastened, and rushed upon Gibeah, and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. 38. Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke to rise up out of the city. 39. And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons; for they said, surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle. 40. But when the flame began to arise up out of the city, with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. 41. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. 42. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel, unto the way of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them: and them which came out of the cities, they destroyed in the midst of them. 43. Thus they enclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sun-rising. 44. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valour. 45. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the high-ways five thousand men, and

and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them. 46. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin, were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour. 47. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. 48. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

We have here a full account of the compleat victory which the Israelites obtained over the Benjamites in the third engagement; the righteous cause was victorious at last, when the managers of it amended what had been amiss; for when a good cause suffers, it is for want of good management. Observe then how the victory was obtained, and how it was pursued.

1. How the victory was obtained. Two things they had trusted too much to in the former engagements, the goodness of their cause, and the superiority of their numbers; it was true, that they had both right and strength on their side, which were great advantages. But they depended too much upon them, to the neglect of those duties, which now this third time, when they see their error, they apply themselves to.

(1.) They were then so confident of the goodness of their cause, that they thought it needless to address themselves to God for his presence and blessing, they took that for granted, nay, perhaps they concluded, that he owed them his favour, and could not in justice withhold it, since it was in defence of virtue that they appeared, and took up arms. But God having shewed them, that he was under no obligation to succeed their enterprize, that he neither needed them, nor was tied to them, that they were more indebted to him for the honour of being ministers of his justice, than he to them for the service, now they became humble petitioners for success. Before they only consulted God's oracle, *who shall go up first?* and *shall we go up?* But now they implored his favour, fasted and prayed, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, ver. 26. to make an atonement for sin, and an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God, as an expression of their desire towards him. We cannot expect the presence of God with us, unless we thus seek it in the way he has appointed. And when they were in this frame, and thus fought the Lord, then he not only ordered them to go up against the Benjamites the third time, but gave them a promise of victory, *to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand*, ver. 28.

(2.) They were then so confident of the greatness of their strength, that they thought it needless to use any art, to lay any ambush, or form a stratagem, not doubting but to conquer them purely by strong hand, but now they saw it was requisite to use some policy, as if they had an enemy to deal with them that had been superior in number, accordingly they set *liers in wait*, ver. 29. and gained their point, as their fathers did before Ai, *Josh. viii.* Stratagems of that kind, being most likely to take effect after a previous defeat, which has flushed the enemy, and made the pretended flight the less suspected. The management of this artifice is here very largely described: The assurance God had given them of success in this day's action, instead of making them remiss and presumptuous, set all heads and hands on work for the effecting of what God had promised. Observe, The method they took; the body of the army faced the city of Gibeah, as they had done before, advancing towards the gates, ver. 30. The Benjamites, the body of whose army was now quartered in Gibeah, sallied out upon them, charged them with great bravery; the besiegers gave back, took on them to retire with precipitation, as if their hearts failed them upon the sight of the Benjamites, which they were willing to believe, who proudly conceited, that by their former success they had made themselves very formidable; some loss the Israelites sustained in this counterfeit flight, about thirty men were cut off in their rear, ver. 31, 39. But when the Benjamites were all drawn out of the city, the ambush seized the city, ver. 37. gave a signal to the body of the army, ver. 38, 40. which immediately turned upon them, ver. 41. and it should seem another considerable party that was posted at Baal-tamar, came upon them at the same time, ver. 33. So that the Benjamites were quite surrounded, which put them into the greatest consternation that could be, sense of guilt now disheartened them, and the higher their hopes had been raised, the more grievous was this confusion. At first *the battle was sore*, ver. 34. the Benjamites laid about them with fury, but when they saw what a snare they were drawn into, they thought one pair of heels (as we say) were worth two pair of hands, and they made the best of their way *towards the wilderness*, ver. 42. but in vain, *the battle overtook them*, and to compleat their distress, *they which came out of the cities of Israel*, that waited to see the event of the battle, joined with the pursuers, and helped to cut them off. Every man's hand was against them.

Observe, In this story, 1. That the Benjamites, in the beginning of the battle, were confident that the day was their own. *They are smitten down before us*, ver. 32, 39. Sometimes God

suffers wicked men to be lifted up in successes and hopes, that their fall may be the sorer. See how short their joy is, and their triumphing but for a moment. *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast*, except he has reason to boast in God. 2. Evil was near them, and they did not know it, ver. 34. But, ver. 41. They saw, when it was too late to prevent it, *that evil was come upon them*. What evils may at any time be near us, we cannot tell, but the less they are feared, the heavier they fall; sinners will not be persuaded to see evil near them, but how dreadful will it be when it comes, and there is no escaping, 1 *Thes. v. 3.* 3. Tho' the men of Israel played their parts so well in this engagement, yet the victory is ascribed to God, ver. 35. *The Lord smote Benjamin before Israel*. The battle was his, and so was the success. 4. They trod down the men of Benjamin with ease, when God fought against them, ver. 43. It is an easy thing to trample upon those who have made God their enemy. See *Mal. iv. 3.*

2. How the victory was prosecuted and improved, in a military execution, done upon these sinners against their own souls. (1.) Gibeah it self was destroyed in the first place, that nest of lewdness. The ambush that entered the city by surprise, drew themselves along, i. e. dispersed themselves into the several parts of it, which they might easily do now all the men of war were sallied out, and very presumptuously left it defenceless; and they smote all they found, even women and children *with the sword*, ver. 37. and set fire to the city, ver. 40. Sin brings ruin upon cities. (2.) The army in the field was quite routed and cut off, eighteen thousand men of valour laid dead upon the spot, ver. 44. (3.) Those that escaped from the field were pursued and cut off in their flight, to the number of seven thousand, ver. 45. It is to no purpose to think of out-running divine vengeance. *Evil pursues sinners*, and it will overtake them. (4.) Even they that tarried at home were involved in the ruin. They *let their sword devour for ever*, not considering that *it would be bitterness in the latter end*, as Abner pleads long after, when he was at the head of an army of Benjamites, probably with an eye to this very story, 2 *Sam. ii. 25, 26.* They put to the sword all that breathed, and set fire to *all the cities*, ver. 48. So that of all the tribe of Benjamin, for ought appears, there remained none alive but six hundred men that took shelter in the rock Rimmon, and lay close there four months, ver. 47. Now, 1. It is hard to justify this severity, as it was Israel's act. The whole tribe of Benjamin was culpable, but must they therefore be used as devoted Canaanites? That it was done in the heat of war, that this was the way of prosecuting victories, which the sword of Israel had been accustomed to, that the Israelites were extremely exasperated against the Benjamites for the slaughter they had made among them in the two former engagements, will go but a little way to excuse the cruelty of this execution. It is true, they had sworn, that whosoever did not come up to Mizpeh should be *put to death*, chap. xxi. 5. But that if it were a justifiable oath, yet extended only to the men of war, the rest were not expected to come. Yet, 2. It is easy to justify the hand of God in it; Benjamin had sinned against him, and God had threatened, that if they forgot him, they should *perish as the nations* that were before them perished, *Deut. viii. 20.* who were all in this manner cut off. It is easy likewise to improve it, for warning against the beginnings of sin, they are *like the letting forth of water*, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with, for we know not *what will be in the end thereof*. The eternal ruin of souls will be worse, and more fearful than all these desolations of a tribe. This affair of Gibeah is twice spoken of by the prophet Hosea, as the beginning of the corruption of Israel, and a pattern to all that followed, chap. ix. 9. *They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah*, and chap. x. 9. *Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah*, and it is added, that *the battles in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not*, i. e. did not at first overtake them.

C H A P. XXI.

The ruins of the tribe of Benjamin, we read of in the foregoing chapter, now here we have, (1.) The lamentation which Israel made over these ruins, ver. 1—4, 6, 15. (2.) The provision they made for the repair of them out of the six hundred men that escaped, for whom they procured wives, (1.) Of the virgins of *Jabesh-gilead*, when they destroyed that city for not sending into the general rendezvous, ver. 5, 7—14. (2.) Of the daughters of *Shiloh*, ver. 16—25. And so this melancholy story concludes.

1. **N**OW the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. 2. And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lift up their voices, and wept sore. 3. And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel? 4. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar,

altar, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings. 5. And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel, that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? for they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death. 6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother; and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day: 7. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8. ¶ And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel, that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9. For the people were numbred, and behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go, and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11. And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lien by man. 12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, four hundred young virgins that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh which *is* in the land of Canaan. 13. And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. 14. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. 15. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD, had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The mighty zeal which the Israelites had expressed against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, as it was countenanced by the tribe of Benjamin. Occasion is here given to mention two instances of their zeal on this occasion, which we did not meet with before.

(1.) While the general convention of the states was in gathering together, and was waiting for a full house before they would proceed, they bound themselves with the great execration, which they called the Cherem, utterly to destroy all those cities that should not send in their representatives, and their quota of men upon this occasion; or, had sentenced them to that curse who should thus refuse, *ver. 5.* for they would look upon such refusers, as having no indignation at the crime committed, no concern for the securing of the nation from God's judgments by the administration of justice, nor any regard to the authority of a common consent, by which they were summoned to meet.

(2.) When they were met, and had heard the cause, they made another solemn oath, that none of all the thousands of Israel, then present, nor any of those whom they represented, (not intending to bind their posterity) should, if they could help it, *marry a daughter* to a Benjamite, *ver. 1.* This was made an article of the war, not with any design to extirpate the tribe, but because in general they would treat them, who were then actors and abettors of this villainy in all respects, as they treated the devoted nations of Canaan, whom they were not only obliged to destroy, but with whom they were forbidden to marry; and because in particular they judged them unworthy to match with a daughter of Israel, that had been so very barbarous and abusive to one of the tender sex, than which nothing could be done more base and villainous, nor a more certain indication, even of a mind perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. We may suppose the Levite's sending the mangled pieces of his wife's body to the several tribes, helped very much to inspire them with all this fury, and much more than a bare narrative of the fact, tho' never so well attested would have done. So much doth the eye affect the heart.

2. The mighty concern which the Israelites did express for the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin when it was done. The tide of their anger at Benjamin's crime did not run so high and so strong before, but the tide of their grief for Benjamin's destruction run as high and as strong after. *They repented for Benjamin their brother*, *ver. 6, 15.* They did not repent of their zeal against the sin, there is a holy indignation against sin, the fruit of godly sorrow, which is *to salvation, not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. But they repented of the sad consequences of what they had done, that they had carried the matter further than was either just or necessary; it had been enough to destroy all they found in arms, they needed not to have cut off the husbandmen and shepherds,

the women and children. Note, (1.) There may be over-doing in well-doing. Great care must be taken in the government of our zeal, lest that which seemed supernatural in its causes, prove unnatural in its effects. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity. Many a war is ill ended which was well begun. (2.) Even necessary justice is to be done with compassion. God doth not punish with delight, nor should men. (3.) Strong passions make work for repentance. What we say, and do in a heat, our calmer thoughts commonly wish undone again. (4.) In a civil war (according to the usage of the Romans) no victories ought to be celebrated with triumphs, because which soever side gets, the community loses, as here *there is a tribe cut off from Israel*. What the better is the body for one member's crushing another?

Now how did they express their concern?

(1.) By their grief for the breach that was made, they came to the house of God, for thither they brought all their doubts; all their counsels, all their cares, and all their sorrows. There was to be heard on this occasion, not the voice of joy and praise; but only that of lamentation, and mourning, and wo. They *lift up their voices and wept sore*, *ver. 2.* not so much for the forty-thousand which they had lost, those would not be so much missed out of eleven tribes, but for the entire destruction of one whole tribe; for this was the complaint they poured out before God, *ver. 3.* *There is one tribe lacking.* God had taken care of every tribe, their number twelve was that which they were known by, every tribe had his station appointed in the camp, and his stone in the high-priest's breast-plate, every tribe had his blessing, both from Jacob and Moses, and it would be an intolerable reproach to them, if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one out of twelve; especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was particularly dear to Jacob their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not, what then will become of Jacob? Benjamin become a Benoni? the son of the right-hand, a son of sorrow! In his trouble they built an altar, not in competition, but in communion with the appointed altar at the door of the tabernacle, which was not large enough to contain all the sacrifices they designed; for they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, to give thanks for their victory. Yet to atone for their own folly in the pursuit of it, and to implore the divine favour in their present strait. Every thing that grieves us should bring us to God.

(2.) By their amicable treaty with the poor distressed refugees that were hid in the rock Rimmon, to whom they sent an act of indemnity, assuring them upon the publick faith, that they would now no longer treat them as enemies, but receive them as brethren, *ver. 13.* The falling out of friends should thus be the renewing of friendship. Even those that have sinned, if at length they repent, must be *forgiven and comforted*, 2 Cor. ii. 7.

(3.) By the care they took to provide wives for them, that their tribe might be built up again, and the ruins of it repaired. Had the men of Israel sought themselves, they would have been secretly pleased with the extinguishing of the families of Benjamin, because then the land allotted to them would escheat to the rest of the tribes (*ob defectum sanguinis*) for want of heirs, and be easily seized for want of occupants; but those have not the spirit of Israelites, who aim to raise themselves upon the ruins of their neighbours. They were so far from any design of this kind, that all heads are at work to find out ways and means for the rebuilding of this tribe. All the women and children of Benjamin were slain; they had sworn not to marry their daughters to any of them, it was against the divine law that they should match with the Canaanites, to oblige them to that, would be in effect to bid them *go serve other gods*:

What must they do then for wives for them? While the poor distressed Benjamites that were hid in the rock, feared their brethren were contriving to ruin them, they were at the same time upon a project to prefer them; and it was this:

1. There was a piece of necessary justice to be done upon the city of Jabesh-Gilead, which belonged to the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. It was found upon looking over the muster-roll which was taken, *chap. xx.* 2. that none appeared from that city upon the general summons, *ver. 8, 9.* and it was then resolved, before it appeared who were absent, that whatever city of Israel should be guilty of such a contempt of the publick authority and interest, that city should be an anathema; Jabesh-Gilead lies under that severe sentence, which might by no means be dispensed with. They that had spared the Canaanites in many places, who were devoted to destruction by the divine command, could not find in their hearts to spare their brethren that were devoted by their own curse. Why did they not now send men to root the Jebusites out of Jerusalem, to avoid whom the poor Levite had been forced to go to Gibeah, *chap. xix.* 11, 12. Men are commonly more zealous to support their own authority than God's. A detachment is therefore sent of twelve thousand men to execute the sentence upon Jabesh-Gilead; having found, that when the whole body of the army went against Gibeah, the people were thought too many for God to deliver them into their hands, on this expedition they sent but a few, *ver. 10.* Their commission is to put all to the sword, men, women, and children, *ver. 11.* according to that law, *Lev. xxvii. 29.* *Whatsoever*

is devoted of men, by those that have power to do it, shall surely be put to death.

2. An expedient is from hence formed for providing the Benjamites with wives. When Moses sent the same number of men to avenge the Lord of Midian, the same orders were given, as here, that all married women should be slain with their husbands as one with them, but that the virgins should be saved alive, *Numb. xxxi. 17, 18.* That precedent was sufficient to support the distinction here made between a wife and a virgin, *ver. 11, 12.* Four hundred virgins that were marriageable, were found in Jabesh-Gilead, and these were married to so many of the surviving Benjamites, *ver. 14.* Their fathers were not present when the vow was made, not to marry with Benjamites, so that they were not under any colour of obligation by it; and besides being a prey taken in war, they were at the dispose of the conquerors. Perhaps, the alliance now contracted between Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead, made Saul, who was a Benjamite, the more concerned for that place, *1 Sam. xi. 4.* tho' then inhabited by new families.

16. ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? 17. And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. 18. Howbeit, we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, *Curst be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. 19. Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north-side of Beth-el, on the east-side of the high-way that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. 20. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go, and lie in wait in the vineyards: 21. And see, and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22. And it shall be when their fathers, or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* you should be guilty. 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them. 24. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe, and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. 25. In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which* was right in his own eyes.

We have here the method that was taken to provide the two hundred Benjamites that remained with wives. And tho' the tribe was reduced to a small number, they were only in care to provide each man with one wife, not with more, under pretence of multiplying them the faster. They may not bestow their daughters upon them, but to save their oath, and yet marry some of their daughters to them, they put them into a way of taking them by surprize, and marrying them, which should be ratified by their parents consent, *ex post facto.* The less consideration is used before the making of a vow, the more commonly there is need of after for the keeping of it.

1. That which gave an opportunity for the doing of this, was a publick ball at Shiloh, in the fields, at which all the young ladies of that city, and the parts adjacent, that were so disposed, met to dance, in honour of a *feast of the Lord* then observed, probably the feast of tabernacles, *ver. 19.* For that feast (bishop

Patrick faith) was the only season wherein the Jewish virgins were allowed to dance; and that, not so much for their own recreation, as to express their holy joy, as David, when he danced before the ark; otherwise the present melancholy posture of publick affairs would have made dancing unseasonable, as *Isa. xxii. 12, 13.* The dancing was very modest and chaste, it was not mixed dancing; no men danced with these daughters of Shiloh, nor did any married women so far forget their gravity, as to join with them. However their dancing thus in publick, made them an easy prey to those that had a design upon them. Whence bishop Hall observes, that *the ambushes of evil spirits carry away many souls from dancing to a fearful desolation.*

2. The elders of Israel gave authority to the Benjamites to do this, to *lie in wait in the vineyards*, which surrounded the green they used to dance on, and when they were in the midst of their sport to come upon them, and catch every man a wife for himself, and carry them straight away to their own country, *ver. 20, 21.* They knew none of their own daughters would be there, so that they could not be said to give them, for they knew nothing of the matter. A sorry *salvo* is better than none, to save the breaking of an oath; it were much better to be cautious in making vows, that there be not occasion afterwards, as there was here *to say before the angel, that it was an error.* Here was a very preposterous way of match-making, when both the mutual affection of the young people, and the consent of the parents must be presumed to come after; the case was extraordinary, and may by no means be drawn into a precedent. Over hasty marriages often occasion a leisurely repentance; and what comfort can be expected by a match made, either by force or fraud. The virgins of Jabesh-Gilead were taken out of the midst of blood and slaughter, but these of Shiloh, out of the midst of mirth and joy; the former had reason to be thankful that they had their lives for a prey, and the latter, it is to be hoped, have no cause to complain, after a while, when they found themselves matched not to men of broken and desperate fortunes, as they seemed to be, who were newly fetched out of a cave, but to men of the best and largest estates in the nation, as they must needs be, when the lot of the whole tribe of Benjamin, which consisted of forty-five thousand six hundred men, *Numb. xxvi. 41.* came to be divided again among six hundred, who had all by survivorship.

3. They undertook to pacify the fathers of these young women; as to the infringement of their paternal authority, they would easily forgive it, when they considered to what fair estates their daughters were matched, and what mothers in Israel they were likely to be; but the oath they were bound by, not to give their daughters to Benjamites, might perhaps stick with some of them, whose consciences were tender, and as to that this might satisfy them. (1.) That the necessity was urgent, *ver. 22.* *We reserved not to each man his wife*, owning now that they did ill to destroy all the women, and desiring to atone for their too rigorous construction of their vow to destroy them, by the most favourable construction of their vow, not to match with them. And therefore for our sakes, who were too severe, let them keep what they have got. For, (2.) In strictness it was not a breach of their vow; they had sworn not to give them their daughters, but they had not sworn to fetch them back if they were forcibly taken. So that if there were any fault, the elders must be responsible, not the parents. And *quod fieri non debuit factum valet.* The thing was done, and is ratified only by connivance, according to the law, *Numb. xxx. 4.*

Lastly, In the close of all we have, (1.) The settling of the tribe of Benjamin again. The few that remained, returned to the inheritance of that tribe, *ver. 23.* And soon after from among them sprang Ehud, who was famous in his generation, the second judge of Israel, *Judg. iii. 15.* (2.) The disbanding and dispersing of the army of Israel, *ver. 24.* They did not set up for a standing army, nor pretend to make any alterations or establishments in the government, but when the affair was over, for which they were called together, they quietly departed in God's peace, every man to his family. Publick services must not make us think ourselves above our own private affairs, and the duty of providing for our own house. (3.) A repetition of the cause of these confusions, *ver. 25.* Tho' God was their king, every man would be his own master, as if there were no king. Blessed be God for magistracy.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Of the Book of RUTH.

This short history of the domestick affairs of one particular family, fitly follows the book of Judges, the events related here happening in the days of the Judges, and fitly goes before the books of Samuel, because in the close it introduceth David: yet the Jews in their Bibles separate it from both, and make it one of the five Megilloth, or Volumes, which they put together towards the latter end; in this order, Solomon's song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. It is probable Samuel was the penman of it. It relates not miracles or laws, wars or victories, or the revolutions of states, but the affliction first, and afterwards the comfort of Naomi; the conversion first, and afterwards the preferment of Ruth. Many such events have happened, which perhaps we may think as well worthy to be recorded. But these God saw fit to transmit the knowledge of to us; and even common historians think they have liberty to choose their subject. The design of this book, is, 1. To lead to providence; to shew us how conversant it is about our private concerns, and to teach us in them all to have an eye to it, acknowledging God in all our ways, and in all events that are concerning us. See 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. Psal. cxiii. 7, 8, 9. 2. To lead to Christ, who descended from Ruth, and part of whose genealogy concludes the book, from whence it is fetched into Matth. i. And in the conversion of Ruth the Moabitess, and the bringing of her into the pedigree of the Messiah, we have a type of the calling of the Gentiles in due time into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. The afflictions of Naomi and Ruth we have an account of, chap. i. Instances of their industry and humility, chap. ii. The bringing of them into an alliance with Boaz, chap. iii. And their happy settlement thereby, chap. iv. And let us remember the scene is laid in Bethlehem, the city where our Redeemer was born.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have Naomi's afflictions. (1.) As a distressed house-keeper, forced by famine to remove into the land of Moab, ver. 1, 2. (2.) As a mournful widow and mother, bewailing the death of her husband and her two sons, ver. 3—5. (3.) As a careful mother-in-law, desirous to be kind to her two daughters, but at a loss how to be so, when she returns to her own country, ver. 6—13. Orpah she parts with in sorrow, ver. 14. Ruth she takes with her in fear, ver. 15—18. (4.) As a poor woman sent back to the place of her first settlement; to be supported by the kindness of her friends, ver. 19—22. All these things were melancholy, and seemed against her, and yet all working for good.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land: and a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife, and his two sons. 2. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah: and they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. 3. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died, and she was left, and her two sons. 4. And they took them wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. 5. And Mahlon and Chilion died also, both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The first words give us all the date we have of this story. It was in the days when the judges ruled, ver. 1. not in those disorderly times when there was no king in Israel. But under which of the judges these things happened we are not told, and the conjecture is uncertain.

tures of the learned are very uncertain. It must be towards the beginning of the judges time, for Boaz, that married Ruth, was born of Rahab, who received the spies in Joshua's time. Some think it was in the days of Ehud, others of Deborah, the learned bishop Patrick inclines to think it was in the days of Gideon, because in his days only, we read of a famine by the Midianites invasion, Judg. vi. 3, 4. While the judges were ruling, some of one city, and some of another, providence takes particular cognizance of Bethlehem, and has an eye to a king, to Messiah himself, who should descend from two Gentile mothers, Rahab and Ruth.

Here is, 1. A famine in the land; in the land of Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey. This was one of the judgments which God had threatned to bring upon them for their sins, Lev. xxvi. 19, 20. He has many arrows in his quiver; in the days of the judges they were oppressed by their enemies, and when by that judgment they were not reformed, God tried this, for when he judgeth he will overcome. When the land had rest, yet it had not plenty, even in Bethlehem, which signifies the house of bread, there was scarcity. A fruitful land is turned into barrenness, to correct and restrain the luxury and wantonness of them that dwell therein.

2. An account of one particular family distressed in the famine, it is that of Elimelech. His name signifies my God a king; agreeable to the state of Israel when the judges ruled, for the Lord was their king; and comfortable to him and his family in their affliction, that God was theirs, and that he reigns for ever. His wife was Naomi, which signifies my amiable or pleasant one. But his sons names were Mahlon and Chilion, sickness and consumption, perhaps because weakly children, and not likely to be long lived. Such are the products of our pleasant things, weak and infirm, fading and dying.

3. The remove of this family from Bethlehem into the country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, for subsistence, because of the famine, ver. 1, 2. It seems there was plenty in the country of Moab, when there was scarcity of bread in the land of Israel. Common gifts of providence are often bestowed in greater plenty upon those that are strangers to God, than upon those that know and

and worship him. *Moab is at ease from his youth*, while *Israel is emptied from vessel to vessel*, Jer. xlviii. 11. not because God loves Moabites better, but because they have *their portion in this life*. Thither Elimelech goes not to settle for ever, but to sojourn for a time, during the dearth, as Abraham, on the like occasion, went into Egypt, and Isaac into the land of the Philistines. Now here, 1. Elimelech's care to provide for his family, and his taking his wife and children with him, were without doubt commendable. *If any provide not for his own, he has denied the faith*, 1 Tim. v. 8. When he was in his straits, he did not over-run his house, go seek his fortune himself, and leave his wife and children to shift for their own maintenance, but, as became a tender husband and a loving father, where he went he took them with him, not as the ostrich, *Job xxxix. 16*. But, 2. I see not how his removal into the country of Moab upon this occasion could be justified. Abraham and Isaac were only sojourners in Canaan, and it was agreeable to their condition to sit, but the seed of Israel were now fixed; and ought not to remove into the territories of the heathen. What reason had Elimelech to go more than any of his neighbours? if by any ill husbandry he had wasted his patrimony, and sold his land, or mortgaged it, (as it should seem, *chap. iv. 3, 4.*) which brought him into a more necessitous condition than others, the law of God had obliged his neighbours to relieve him, *Lev. xxv. 35*. but that was not his case, for he went out full, *ver. 1*. By those who tarried at home, it appears, that the famine was not so extreme, but that there was sufficient to keep life and soul together; and his charge was but small, only two sons. But if he could not be content with the short allowance that his neighbours took up with, and *in the day of famine could not be satisfied*, unless he kept as plentiful a table as he had done formerly; if he could not live in hope that there would come years of plenty again in due time, or could not with patience wait for those years, it was his fault, and he did by it dishonour God, and the good land he had given them, *weaken the hands of his brethren*, with whom he should have been willing to take his lot, and set an ill example to others. If all should do as he did, Canaan would be dispeopled. Note, It is an evidence of a discontented distrustful unstable spirit to be sick of the place in which God hath set us, and to be for leaving it presently, whenever we meet with any uneasiness or inconvenience in it. It is folly to think of out-running that cross which being laid in our way, we ought to take up. It is our wisdom to make the best of that which is, for it is seldom that changing our place is mending it. Or if he would remove, why to the country of Moab? if he had made enquiry, it is probable he would have found plenty in some of the tribes of Israel, those, for instance, on the other side Jordan that bordered on the land of Moab; if he had that zeal for God and his worship, and that affection for his brethren which became an Israelite, he would not have persuaded himself so easily to go to sojourn among Moabites.

4. The marriage of his two sons to two of the daughters of Moab, after his death, *ver. 4*. All agree this was ill done; the Chaldee faith, *they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord in taking strange wives*. If they would not stay unmarried till their return to the land of Israel, they were not so far off but that they might have fetched them wives from thence. Little did Elimelech think when he went to sojourn in Moab, that ever his sons should thus join in affinity with Moabites. But those that bring young people into bad acquaintance, and take them out of the way of public ordinances, tho' they may think them well principled, and armed against temptation, know not what they do, nor *what will be in the end hereof*. It doth not appear that these women they married were profelyted to the Jewish religion, for Orpah is said to return to her gods, *ver. 15*. the gods of Moab were her's still. It is a groundless tradition of the Jews, that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon king of Moab, yet the Chaldee paraphrast inserts it; but this and their other tradition which he inserts likewise, cannot consist, that Boaz, who married Ruth, was the same with Ibzan who judged Israel two hundred years after Eglon's death, *Judg. xiii*.

5. The death of Elimelech and his two sons, and the disconsolate condition Naomi was thereby reduced to. Her husband died, *ver. 3*. and her two sons, *ver. 5*. soon after their marriage, and the Chaldee faith, *their days were shortened*, because they transgressed the law in marrying strange wives. See here (1.) That wherever we go we cannot out-run death, whose fatal arrows fly in all places. (2.) That we cannot expect to prosper when we go out of the way of our duty. *He that will save his life by any indirect courses shall lose it*. (3.) That death when it comes into a family, often makes breach upon breach. One is taken away, to prepare another to follow soon after; one is taken away, and that affliction is not duly improved, and therefore God sends another of the same kind. When Naomi had lost her husband, she took so much the more complacency, and put so much the more confidence in her sons, under the shadow of those surviving comforts, she thinks she shall live among the heathen; and exceeding glad she was of these gourds; but behold they wither presently; *green and growing up in the morning, cut down and dried up before night*. Buried soon after they were married, for neither of them left any children. So uncertain and transient are all our enjoyments here. It is therefore our wisdom to make sure those comforts that will be made sure, and which death cannot rob us of.

But how desolate was the condition, and how disconsolate the spirit of poor Naomi, when the woman was left of her two sons and her husband! When these two things come upon her in a moment, come upon her in their perfection, by whom shall she be comforted? *lofs of children and widowhood*, Isa. xlvii. 9.—li. 19. It is God alone who has wherewithal to comfort those that are thus cast down.

6. ¶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab, how that the LORD had visited his people, in giving them bread. 7. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her: and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 8. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mothers house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. 9. The LORD grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them: and they lift up their voice, and wept. 10. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. 11. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12. Turn again, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have an husband: if I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night and should also bear sons: 13. Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. 14. And they lift up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law, but Ruth clave unto her. 15. And she said, Behold thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. 16. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: 17. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. 18. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

See here, 1. The good affection Naomi bore to the land of Israel, *ver. 6*. Tho' she could not stay in it while the famine lasted, she would not stay out of it when the famine ceased: tho' the country of Moab had afforded her shelter and supply in a time of need, yet she did not intend it should be her rest for ever, no land should be that but the holy land, in which the sanctuary of God was, of which he had said, *This is my rest for ever*. Observe, 1. God at last returned in mercy to his people, for tho' he contend long, he will not contend always. As the judgment of oppression, under which they often groaned in the time of the judges, still came to an end, after a while, when God had raised them up a deliverer. So here the judgment of famine; at length God graciously visited his people in giving them bread. Plenty is God's gift, and it is his visitation that by bread, the staff of life, holds our souls in life. Tho' this mercy be the more sensible when it comes after famine, yet if we have constantly enjoyed it, and never knew what famine meant, we are not to think it the less valuable. 2. Naomi then returned in duty to her people. She had oft enquired of their state, what harvests they had, and how the markets went, and still the tidings were discouraging, but at last like the prophet's servant who looked seven times, and saw no sign of rain, at length discerned a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which soon overspread the heavens; so Naomi at last has good news brought her of plenty in Bethlehem, and then she can think of no other but returning thither again. Her new alliances in the country of Moab, could not make her forget her relation to the land of Israel. Note, Tho' there be a reason for our being in bad places, yet when the reason ceaseth, we must by no means continue in them. Forced absence from God's ordinances, and forced presence with wicked people, is a great affliction, but when the force ceaseth, and it is continued of choice, then it becomes a great sin. It should seem she began to think of returning immediately upon the death of her two sons. (1.) Because she looked upon that affliction to be a judgment upon her family for lingering in the country of Moab, and hearing this to be the voice of the rod, and of him that appointed it she obeys and returns. Had she returned upon the death of her husband, perhaps she might have saved the life of her sons, but when God judgeth he will overcome, and if one affliction prevail not to awaken us to a fight and sense of sin and duty another shall. When death comes into a family, it

it ought to be improved for the reforming what is amiss in the family: when relations are taken away from us, we are put upon enquiry, whether, in some instance or other, we are not out of the way of our duty, that we may return to it. God calls our sins to remembrance when he stays a son, 1 Kings xvii. 18. And if thus he hedge up our way with thorns, it is that he may oblige us to say, we will go and return to our first husband, as Naomi here to her country, *Hof. ii. 7.* (2.) Because the land of Moab was now become a melancholy place to her. It is with little pleasure that she can breathe in that air in which her husband and sons had expired; or go on that ground in which they lay buried or out of her sight, but not out of her thoughts; now she will go to Canaan again. Thus God takes away from us the comforts we stay our selves too much upon, and solace our selves too much in here in the land of our sojourning, that we may think more of our home in the other world, and by faith and hope may hasten towards it. Earth is embittered to us, that heaven may be endeared.

2. The good affection which her daughters in law, and one of them especially, bore to her, and her generous return of their good affection.

1. They were both so kind as to accompany her, some part of the way at least, when she returned towards the land of Judah. Her two daughters-in-law did not go about to persuade her to continue in the land of Moab, but if she was resolved to go home, would pay her all possible civility, and respect, at parting; and this was one instance of it, they would bring her on her way, at least to the utmost limits of their country, and help her to carry her luggage as far as they went, for it doth not appear she had any servant to attend her, *ver. 7.* By this we see both that Naomi, as became an Israelite, had been very kind and obliging to them, and had won their love, in which she is an example to all mothers-in-law; and that Orpah and Ruth had a just sense of her kindness, for they were willing to return it thus far. It was a sign they had dwelt together in unity, tho' they were dead by whom the relation between them came. Tho' they retained an affection to the gods of Moab, *ver. 15.* and Naomi was still faithful to the God of Israel, yet that was no hindrance to either side from love and kindness, and all the good offices that the relation required. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are too often at variance, *Mat. x. 35.* and therefore it is the more commendable if they live in love; let all in that relation aim at the praise of doing so.

2. When they had gone a little way with her, Naomi with a great deal of affection urged them to go back, *ver. 8, 9.* Return each to her mothers house. When they were dislodged by a sad providence from the house of their husbands, it was a mercy to them, that they had their parents yet living, that they had their houses to go to, where they might be welcome and easy, and were not turned out to the wide world. Naomi suggests, that their own mothers would be more agreeable to them, than a mother-in-law, especially when their own mothers had houses, and their mother-in-law was not sure she had a place to lay her head in, she could call her own.

She dismisseth them, (1.) *With commendation*; that is a debt owing to those who have carried themselves well in any relation, they ought to have the praise of it, *you have dealt kindly with the dead, and with me, i. e.* you were good wives to your husbands that are gone, and have been good daughters to me, and not wanting to your duty in either relation. Note, When we and our relations are parting, by death or otherwise, it is very comfortable, if we have both their testimony, and the testimony of our own consciences for us, that while we were together, we carefully endeavoured to do our duty in the relation. This will help to allay the bitterness of parting; and while we are together, we should labour so to carry ourselves, as that when we part, we may not have cause to reflect with regret upon our miscarriages in the relation. (2.) *With prayer.* It is very proper for friends when they part, to part with prayer. She sends them home with her blessing, and the blessing of a mother-in-law is not to be slighted. She twice mentions the name Jehovah, Israel's God, and the only true God, in this blessing, that she might direct her daughters to look up to him as the alone fountain of all good. To him she prays in general, that he would recompense to them, the kindness they had shewed to her and her's. It may be expected and prayed for in faith, that God will deal kindly with those that have dealt kindly with their relations. *He that watereth, shall be watered also himself.* And in particular, that they might be happy in marrying again. *The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.* Note, 1. It is very fit, that, according to the apostle's direction, (1 Tim. v. 14.) the younger women, and he speaks there of young widows, should marry, bear children, and guide the house. And those that have approved themselves good wives, it is a pity but they should again be blessed with good husbands, especially those that, like these widows, have no children. 2. The married state is a state of rest, such rests as this world affords, rest in the house of a husband more than can be expected in the house of a mother, or a mother-in-law. 3. This rest is God's gift. If any content and satisfaction be found in our outward condition, God must be acknowledged in it. There are those that are unequally yoked, that find

little rest even in the house of a husband. Their affliction ought to make those the more thankful, to whom the relation is comfortable; yet let God be the rest of the soul, and no perfect rest thought of on this side heaven. (3.) She dismissed them with great affection; she kissed them; wished she had somewhat better to give them, but silver and gold she has none: However, this parting kiss shall be the seal of such a true friendship, as (tho' she never see them more) she will, while she lives, retain the grateful remembrance of. If relations must part, let them thus part in love, that they may (if they never meet again in this world) meet in the world of everlasting love.

3. The two young widows could not think of parting with their good mother-in-law, so much had the good conversation of that pious Israelite won upon them; they not only lift up their voice and wept, as loth to part, but they professed resolution to adhere to her, *ver. 10.* Surely we will return with thee unto thy people, and take our lot with thee. It is a rare instance of affection to a mother-in-law, and an evidence that they had for her sake conceived a good opinion of the people of Israel. Even Orpah who afterwards went back to her gods, now seemed resolved to go forward with Naomi. The sad ceremony of parting, and the tears shed on that occasion drew from her this protestation, but it did not hold. Strong passions without a settled judgment commonly produce weak resolutions.

4. Naomi sets herself to dissuade them from going along with her, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* If she had had any sons in Canaan, or any near kinsmen, who she could expect might marry the widows, to raise up seed to them that were gone, and to redeem the mortgaged estate of the family, it might have been some encouragement to them to hope for a comfortable settlement at Bethlehem. But she had no sons, nor could she think of any near kinsman, likely to do the kinsman's part, and therefore argues, that she was never likely to have any sons to be husbands for them, for she was too old to have a husband, it became her age to think of dying and going out of the world, not of marrying and beginning the world again. Or if she had a husband, she could not expect to have children, nor if she had sons, could she think that these young widows would stay unmarried, till her sons that should yet be born would grow up to be marriageable. Yet this was not all, she could not only not propose to herself to marry them like themselves, but she knew not how to maintain them like themselves: The greatest grievance of that poor condition to which she was reduced, was, that she was not in a capacity to do for them as she would. *It grieveth me more for your sakes,* than for my own, *that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.* Observe, 1. She judges herself chiefly aimed at in the affliction; that God's quarrel was principally with her, *the hand of the Lord is gone out against me,* I am the sinner, it is with me that God has a controversy, it is with me that he is contending, I take it to my self; this will become us when we are under affliction, tho' many others share in the trouble, yet we must hear the voice of the rod, as if it spoke only against us, and to us, not billeting the rebukes of it at other peoples houses, but taking them to ourselves. 2. She laments most the trouble that redounded to them from it. She was the sinner, but they were the sufferers, *it grieveth me much for your sakes.* A gracious generous spirit can better bear its own burthen, than it can bear to see that a grievance to others, or others any way drawn into trouble by it. Naomi could easier want herself, than see her daughters want. Therefore turn again my daughters, for alas, I am in no capacity to do you any kindness.

But did Naomi do well, thus to discourage her daughters from going with her, when by taking them with her, she might save them from the idolatry of Moab, and bring them to the faith and worship of the God of Israel. Naomi no doubt desired to do that. But, (1.) If they did come with her, she would not have them to come upon her account; those that take upon them a profession of religion, only in complaisance to their relations, to oblige their friends, or for company sake, will be converts of small value, and of short continuance. (2.) If they did come with her, she would have them to make it their deliberate choice, and to sit down first and count the cost, as it concerns those to do, that may take up a profession of religion. It is good for us to be told the worst; our Saviour took this course with him, that in a pang of zeal spoke that big word, *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*; Come, come, faith Christ, canst thou fare as I fare? *The son of man hath not where to lay his head*; know that, and then consider whether thou canst find in thy heart to take thy lot with him, *Mat. viii. 29.* Thus Naomi deals with her daughters-in-law. Thoughts ripened into resolves by serious consideration, are likely to be kept always in the imagination of the heart, whereas what is soon ripe, is soon rotten.

5. Orpah was easily persuaded to yield to her own corrupt inclination, and to go back to her country, her kindred and her father's house, now when she stood fair for an effectual call from it. They both lift up their voice and wept again, *ver. 14.* being much affected with the tender things that Naomi had said, but it had a different effect upon them; to Orpah it was a favour of death unto death; the representation Naomi had made of the inconvenience they must count upon, if they went forward to Canaan, sent her back to the country of Moab, and served her for an excuse of her apostasy. But, on the contrary, it strengthened Ruth's resolution, and

and her good affection to Naomi, with whose wisdom and goodness she was never so charmed, as she was upon this occasion; thus to her it was a favour of life unto life. (1.) Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, *i. e.* took dear leave of her, bid her farewell for ever, without any purpose to follow her hereafter, as he that said, he would follow Christ, when he had buried his father, or bidden them farewell that were at home. Orpah's kiss shewed she had an affection for Naomi, and was loth to part from her, yet she did not love her well enough to quit her country for her sake. Thus, many have a value and affection for Christ, and yet come short of salvation by him, because they cannot find in their hearts to forsake other things for him. They love him, and yet leave him, because they do not love him enough, but love other things better. Thus the young man that went away from Christ, went away sorrowful, *Matt. xix. 22.* But, (2.) *Ruth clave unto her.* Whether when she came from home she was resolved to go forward with her or no, doth not appear; perhaps she was before determined what to do, out of a sincere affection to the God of Israel, and to his law, which by the good instructions of Naomi she had some knowledge of.

6. Naomi persuades Ruth to go back, urging as a further inducement her sister's example, *ver. 15.* *Thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people,* and therefore of course gone back to her gods, for whatever she might have done while she lived with her mother-in-law, it would be next to impossible for her to shew any respect to the God of Israel, when she went to live among the worshippers of Chemosh. Those that forsake the communion of saints, and return to the people of Moab, will certainly break off their communion with God, and embrace the idols of Moab. Now, *return thou after thy sister, i. e.* if ever thou wilt return, return now. This is the greatest trial of thy constancy, stand this trial, and thou art mine for ever. Such offences as that of Orpah's revolt must needs come, that they which are perfect and sincere may be made manifest, as Ruth was upon this occasion.

7. Ruth puts an end to the debate by a most solemn profession of her immovable resolution, never to forsake her, nor to return to her own country, and her old relations again, *ver. 16, 17.* Nothing could be said more fine, more brave, than this; she seems to have had another spirit, and another speech now her sister was gone, and it is an instance of the grace of God, inclining the soul to the resolute choice of the better part. *Draw me thus, and we will run after thee.* Her mother's dissuasions made her the more resolute; as when Joshua said to the people, *ye cannot serve the Lord,* they said it with the more vehemence, *nay, but we will.*

1. She begs of her mother-in-law to say no more against her going, *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee,* for all thy intreaties now, cannot shake that resolution which thy instructions formerly have wrought in me; and therefore let me hear no more of them. Note, It is a great vexation and uneasiness to those that are resolved for God and religion to be tempted and solicited to alter their resolution. They that would not think of it, would not hear of it. *Intreat me not.* The margin reads it, *Be not against me.* Note, We are to reckon those against us, and really our enemies, that would hinder us in our way to the heavenly Canaan. Our relations they may be, but they cannot be our friends that would dissuade us from, and discourage us in, the service of God, and the work of religion.

2. She is very particular in her resolution to cleave to her, and never to forsake her; and she speaks the language of one resolved for God and heaven. She is so in love, not with her mother's beauty, or riches, or gaiety, all those were withered and gone, but with her wisdom and virtue, and grace, which remained with her, even in her present poor and melancholy condition, that she resolves to stick to her. (1.) She will travel with her; *whither thou goest I will go,* tho' to a country I never saw, and which I have been trained up, in a low and ill opinion of; tho' far from my own country, yet with thee every road shall be pleasant. (2.) She will dwell with her, *where thou lodgest I will lodge,* tho' it be in a cottage, nay, tho' it be no better a lodging than Jacob had, when he had the stones for his pillow. Where thou settest up thy staff, I will set up mine, be it where it will. (3.) She will twist interests with her, *thy people shall be my people.* From Naomi's character she concludes certainly, that great nation was a wise and understanding people, judges of them all by her good mother, who, wherever she went, was a credit to her country, (as all those should study to be, who profess relation to the better country, that is, the heavenly) and therefore she will think herself happy, if she may be reckoned one of them. Thy people shall be mine to associate with, to be conformable to, and to be concerned for. (4.) She will join in religion with her; thus she determined to be her's, *usque ad aras, thy God shall be my God,* and farewell to all the gods of Moab, which are vanity and a lie. I will adore the God of Israel, the only living and true God, trust in him alone, serve him, and in every thing be ruled by him; this is to take the Lord for our God. (5.) She will gladly die in the same bed; *where thou diest will I die,* she takes it for granted they must both die, that in all probability Naomi, as the elder, would die first, and resolves to continue in the same house, if it might be, till her days also were fulfilled;

intimating likewise a desire to partake of her happiness in death; she wishes to die in the same place, in token of her dying after the same manner, let me die the death of righteous Naomi, and let my last end be like her's. (6.) She will desire to be buried in the same grave, and to lay her bones by her's: *There will I be buried,* not desiring to have so much as her dead body carried back to the country of Moab, in token of any remaining kindness for it, but Naomi and she having joined souls, she desires they may mingle dust, in hopes of rising together, and being together for ever in the other world.

3. She backs her resolution to adhere to Naomi with a solemn oath, *The Lord do so to me, and more also,* (which was an ancient form of imprecation) *if ought but death part thee and me.* An oath for confirmation was an end of this strife, and would leave a lasting obligation upon her, never to forsake that good way she was now making choice of. (1.) It is implied, that death would separate between them for a time. She could promise to die, and be buried in the same place, but not at the same time; it might so happen, that she might die first, and that would part them. Note, Death parts those whom nothing else will part. A dying hour is a parting hour, and should be so thought of by us, and prepared for. (2.) It is resolved that nothing else shall part them; nor any kindness from her own family and people, nor any hope of preferment among them; nor any unkindness from Israel, nor the fear of poverty and disgrace among them. No, I will never leave thee.

Now this is a pattern of a resolute convert to God and religion; thus must we be at a point. (1.) We must take the Lord for our God. This God is *my God for ever and ever,* I have avouched him for mine. (2.) When we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people in all conditions, tho' they be a poor despised people, yet if they be his, they must be ours. (3.) Having cast in our lot among them, we must be willing to take our lot with them, and to fare as they fare. Submit to the same yoke, and draw in it faithfully, take up the same cross, and carry it cheerfully, go where God would have us to go, tho' it should be into banishment, and lodge where he will have us to lodge, tho' it be in a prison; die where he will have us die, and lay our bones in the graves of the upright, who enter into peace, and rest in their beds, tho' they be but the graves of the common people. (4.) We must resolve to continue and persevere, and herein our adherence to Christ must be closer than that of Ruth to Naomi; she resolved, that nothing but death should separate them, but we must resolve that death it self shall not separate us from our duty to Christ, and then we may be sure that death it self shall not separate us from our happiness in Christ. (5.) We must bind our souls with a bond, never to break these pious resolutions, and swear unto the Lord that we will cleave to him. Fast bind, fast find. He that means honestly, doth not startle at assurances.

Lastly, Naomi was hereby silenced, *ver. 18.* *When she saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her,* which was the very thing she aimed at in all that she had said, to make her of a stedfast mind in going with her, when she saw that she had gained her point, she was very well satisfied, and left off speaking to her. She could desire no more than that solemn protestation Ruth had just now made. See the power of resolution, how it puts temptation to silence. Those that are resolved, and go in religious ways without a stedfast mind, tempt the tempter, and stand like a door half-jar, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the devil, and forces him to flee.

The Chaldee paraphrase, thus relates the debate between Naomi and Ruth. Ruth said, *Intreat me not to leave thee,* for I will be a proselyte; Naomi said, *We are commanded to keep sabbaths and good days, on which we may not travel above two thousand cubits (a sabbath-day's journey);* well, saith Ruth, *Whither thou goest, I will go.* Naomi said, *We are commanded not to tarry all night with Gentiles;* well, saith Ruth, *Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.* Naomi said, *We are commanded to keep six hundred and thirteen precepts,* well, saith Ruth, *Whatever thy people keep, I will keep, for they shall be my people:* Naomi said, *We are forbidden to worship any strange god;* well, saith Ruth, *Thy God shall be my God.* Naomi said, *We have four sorts of deaths for malefactors, stoning, burning, strangling, and slaying with the sword;* well, said Ruth, *Where thou diest, I will die.* *We have,* saith Naomi, *houses of sepulchre,* and there (saith Ruth) *will I be buried.*

19. ¶ So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?* 20. And she said unto them, *Call me not Naomi, call me Mara:* for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? 22. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter in law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

Naomi and Ruth, after many a weary step (the fatigue of the journey, we may suppose being somewhat relieved by the good instructions Naomi gave to her proselyte, and the good discourse they had together) came at last to Bethlehem. And they came very seasonably in the beginning of barley-harvest, which was the first of their harvests, that of wheat following after. Now Naomi's own eyes might convince her of the truth of what she had heard in the country of Moab, that *the Lord had visited his people, in giving them bread*, and Ruth might see this good land in its best clothes: And now they had opportunity to provide for winter. *Our times are in God's hand*; both the events, and the time of them.

Notice is here taken,

1. Of the discomposure of the neighbours upon this occasion, ver. 19. *All the city was moved about them*. Her old acquaintance gathered about her, to enquire concerning her state, and to bid her welcome to Bethlehem again. Or, perhaps they were moved about her, lest she should be a charge to the town, she looked so bare. By this it appears, that she had formerly lived in good fashion, else there had not been so much notice taken of her. If those that have been in a high and prosperous condition break, and fall into poverty or disgrace, their fall is the more remarkable; and they said, *Is this Naomi?* The women of the town said it, for the word is feminine. They with whom she had formerly been intimate, were surprized to see her in this condition; she was so much broken and altered with her afflictions, that they could scarce believe their own eyes, nor think that this was the same person whom they had formerly seen, so fresh, and fair, and gay, *is this Naomi?* So unlike is the rose when it is withered, to what it was when it was blooming. What a poor figure doth Naomi make now, to what she made in her prosperity! If any asked this question in contempt, upbraiding her with her miseries; is this she that could not be content to fare as her neighbours did, but must ramble to a strange country, see what she has got by it? their temper was very base and sordid; nothing more barbarous, than to triumph over those that are fallen: But we may suppose most asked it in compassion and commiseration; is this she that lived so plentifully, and kept so good a house, and was so charitable to the poor, *how is the gold become dim?* They that had seen the magnificence of the first temple wept, when they saw the meanness of the second: So these here, Note, Afflictions will make great and surprizing changes in a little time. When we see how sickness and old age alter people, changes their countenance and temper, we may think of what the Bethlehemites said, *is this Naomi?* one would not take it to be the same person. God by his grace fit us for all such changes, especially the great change!

2. Of the composure of Naomi's spirit: If some upbraided her with her poverty, she was not moved against them, as she would have been, if she had been poor and proud, but with a great deal of pious patience, bore that, and all the other melancholy effects of her affliction, ver. 20, 21. *Call me not Naomi, call me Mara*, &c. Naomi signifies pleasant or amiable, but all my pleasant things are laid waste, call me Mara, bitter, or bitterness, for I am now a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Thus doth she bring her mind to her condition, which we ought all to do, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind. Observe,

1. The change of her state, and how that is described, with a pious regard to the divine providence, and without any passionate murmurings or complaints. (1.) It was a very sad and melancholy change. She *went out full*, so she thought her self when she had her husband with her and two sons. Much of the fulness of our comfort in this world ariseth from agreeable relations: But she now *came home again empty*, a widow, and childless, and probably had sold her goods, and of all the effects she took with her, brought home no more than the clothes on her back. So uncertain is all that which we call fulness in the creature, 1 Sam. ii. 5. Even in the fulness of that sufficiency we may be in straits. But there is a fulness, a spiritual and divine fulness, which we can never be emptied of; a good part which shall not be taken from those that have it. (2.) She acknowledgeth the hand of God, his mighty hand in the affliction. It is the Lord that has brought me home again empty; it is the Almighty that hath afflicted me. Note, Nothing conduceth more to satisfy a gracious soul under an affliction, than the consideration of the hand of God in it. *It is the Lord*, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Job i. 21. Especially to consider, that he that afflicts us is Shaddai, the Almighty, with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is our duty and interest to submit. It is that name of God by which he enters into covenant with his people, *I am God Almighty, God All-sufficient*, Gen. xvii. 1. He afflicts as a God in covenant, and his all-sufficiency may be our support and supply under all our afflictions. He that empties us of the creature, knows how to fill us with himself. (3.) She speaks very feelingly of the impression which the affliction had made upon her. He has dealt very bitterly with me. The cup of affliction is a bitter cup; and even that which afterwards yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, yet for the present is not joyous, but grievous, Heb. xii. 11. Job complains, *thou writest bitter things against me*, Job xiii. 26. (4.) She owns the affliction to come from God as a controversy. *The Lord hath testified against me*. Note, When God corrects us, he testifies against us, and contends

with us, Job x. 17. intimating, that he is displeased with us. Every rod has a voice, the voice of a witness.

2. The compliance of her spirit with this change. *Call me not Naomi*, for I am no more pleasant, either to my self, or to my friends, but *call me Mara*, a name more agreeable to my present state. Many that are debased and impoverished, yet affect to be called by the empty names, and titles of honour they have formerly enjoyed; Naomi did not so: Her humility matters not a glorious name in a dejected state, if God deal bitterly with her, she accommodates her self to the dispensation, and is willing to be called Mara, bitter. Note, It well becomes us to have our hearts humbled under humbling providences. When our condition is brought down, our spirits should be brought down with it. And then our troubles are sanctified to us, when we thus comport with them; for it is not an affliction it self, but an affliction rightly born that doth us good. *Perdidisti tot mala, si nondum misera esse didicisti*. Sen. ad Helv. *Tribulation works patience*.

CHAP. II.

Sure there is scarce any chapter in all the sacred history that stoops so low as this, to take cognizance of so mean a person as Ruth, a poor Moabitish widow, so mean an action as her gleaning corn in a neighbour's field, and the minute circumstances thereof. But all this was in order to her being grafted into the line of Christ, and taken in among his ancestors, that she might be a figure of the espousals of the Gentile church to Christ (Isa. liv. 1.). And this makes the story remarkable; and many of the passages of it are instructive, and very improveable. Here is, 1. Ruth's humility and industry in gleaning corn, providence directing her to Boaz's field, ver. 1—3. 2. The great favour which Boaz shewed to her in many instances, ver. 4—16. 3. The return of Ruth to her mother-in-law, ver. 18—23.

1. **A**ND Naomi had a kinsman of her husbands, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. 2. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him, in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3. And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Naomi had now gained a settlement in Bethlehem among her old friends, and here we have an account,

1. Of her rich kinsman, Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, ver. 1. The Chaldee reads it, *mighty in the law*; if he were both, it was a most rare and excellent conjunction, to be mighty in wealth, and mighty in the scriptures too; those that are so are mighty indeed. He was grandson of Nahshon, that was prince of the tribe of Judah in the wilderness, and son of Salmon, probably a younger son, by Rahab, the harlot of Jericho; he carries might in his name, Boaz, in him is strength; and he was of the family of Elimelech, that family which was now reduced and brought so low. Observe, (1.) Boaz, tho' a rich and great man had poor relations; every branch of the tree is not a top-branch. Let not those that are great in the world, be ashamed to own their kindred that are mean and despised, lest they be found therein proud, scornful, and unnatural. (2.) Naomi, tho' a poor contemptible widow, had rich relations, whom yet she neither boasted of, nor was burthenfome to, nor expected any thing from when she was returned to Bethlehem in distress. Those that have rich relations, while they themselves are poor, ought to know it is the wise providence of God that makes the difference, in which we ought to acquiesce; and that to be proud of our relation to such, is a great sin, and to trust to it, is great folly.

2. Of her poor daughter-in-law, Ruth. (1.) Her condition was very low and poor; which was a great trial to the faith and constancy of a young proselyte. The Bethlehemites had done well, if they had invited Naomi and her daughter-in-law first to one good house, and then to another, it would have been a great support to an aged widow, and a great encouragement to a new convert, but instead of tasting the dainties of Canaan, they have no way of getting necessary food, but by gleaning corn, and otherwise, for ought appears, they might have starved. Note, *God has chosen the poor of this world*, and poor they are like to be, for tho' God hath chosen them, commonly men overlook them. (2.) Her character in this condition was very good, ver. 2. She said to Naomi, not let me now go to the land of Moab again, for there is no living here; here there is want; but in my father's house there is bread enough. No, she is not mindful of the country from which she came out, otherwise she had now a fair occasion to return; the God of Israel shall be her God, and tho' he slay her, yet will she trust in him, and never forsake him. But her request is, *let me go to the field and glean ears of corn*. Those that are well born, and have been well brought up, know not what straits they

they may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be obliged to get their bread by, *Lam. iv. 5.* When the case is thus melancholy, let Ruth be remembered, who is a great example,

1. Of humility, when providence had made her poor, she did not say, to glean, which is in effect to beg, I am ashamed, but cheerfully stoops to the meanness of her circumstances, and accommodates her self to her lot. High spirits can easier starve than stoop, Ruth was none of those. She doth not tell her mother, she was never brought up to live upon crumbs. Tho' she was not brought up to it, she is brought down to it, and is not uneasy at it. Nay, it is her own motion, not her mother's injunction; humility is one of the brightest ornaments of youth, and one of the best omens. Before Ruth's honour was this humility. Observe, how humbly she speaks of her self, in her expectation of leave to glean; let me glean after him, *in whose sight I shall find grace.* She doth not say, I will go glean, and sure no body will deny me the liberty, but I will go glean, in hopes some body will allow me the liberty. Note, Poor people must not demand kindness as a debt, but humbly ask it, and take it as a favour, tho' in never so small a matter. It becomes the poor to use intreaties.

2. Of industry. She doth not say to her mother in law, let me go now a visiting to the ladies of the town, or go a walking in the fields to take the air, and be merry, I cannot sit all day moping with you; no, it is not sport, but business that her heart is upon, *let me go and glean ears of corn,* and that will turn to some good account. She was one of those virtuous women that love not to eat the bread of idleness, but loved to take pains. This is an example to young people, let them learn betimes to labour, and *what their hand finds to do, do it with their might;* a disposition to diligence bodes well, both for this world and the other. Love not sleep, love not sport, love not fantering, but love business. It is also an example to poor people to work for their living, and not beg that which they are able to earn. We must not be shy of any honest employment, tho' it be mean, *ἐργον ἔδειξεν οὐκ ἐπίδοξον.* Sin is a thing below us, but we must not think any thing else so that providence calls us to.

3. Of regard to her mother; tho' she was but her mother-in-law, and tho' being loosed by death from the law of her husband, she might easily suppose her self thereby loosed from the law of her husband's mother, yet she is dutifully observant of her. She will not go out without letting her know, and asking her leave. This respect young people ought to shew to their parents and governors, it is part of the honour due to them. She did not say, mother, if you will go with me, I will go glean, but do you sit at home, and take your ease, and I will go abroad, and take pains. *Juniores ad labores.* Let young people take advice from the aged, but not put them upon toil.

4. Of dependence upon providence; intimated in that, I will glean after him, *in whose sight I shall find grace.* She knows not which way to go, nor whom to enquire for, but will trust providence to raise her up some friend or other that will be kind to her. Let us always keep up good thoughts of the divine providence, and believe, that while we do well, that will do well for us.

And it did well for Ruth, for when she went out alone, without guide or companion to glean, her hap was to light on the field of Boaz, *ver. 3.* To her it seemed casual, she knew not whose field it was, nor had she any reason for going to that more than any other, and therefore it is said to be *her hap,* but providence directed her steps to this field. Note, God wisely orders small events, and those that seem altogether contingent serve his own glory, and the good of his people. Many a great affair is brought about by a little turn, which seemed fortuitous to us, but was directed by providence with design.

4. ¶ And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you: and they answered him, The LORD bless thee. 5. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? 6. And the servant that was set over the reapers, answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel, that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7. And she said, I pray you let me glean, and gather after the reapers amongst the sheaves: So she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. 8. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Heardest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. 9. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men, that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. 10. Then she fell on her face, and bowed her self to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? 11. And Boaz answered and said

unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. 12. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. 13. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord, for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. 14. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat and was sufficed, and left. 15. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. 16. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

Now Boaz himself appears, and a great deal of decency there appears in his carriage, both towards his own servants, and towards this poor stranger.

1. Towards his own servants, and those that were employed for him, in reaping and gathering in his corn. Harvest-time is busy time, many hands must then be at work, Boaz that had much, being a mighty man of wealth, had much to do, and consequently many to work under him, and to live upon him; *as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes?* Boaz is here an example of a good master.

(1.) He had a servant that was set over the reapers, *ver. 6.* In great families, it is requisite there should be one to oversee the rest of the servants, and appoint to each their portion, both of work and meat. Ministers are such servants in God's house, and it is requisite that they be both wise and faithful, and *shew their Lord all things,* as he here, *ver. 6.*

(2.) Yet he came himself to his reapers, to see how the work went forward, if he found any thing amiss, to rectify it, and to give further orders, what should be done. This was both for his own interest, he that wholly leaves his business to others, will have it done by the halves: the master's eye makes a fat horse: and it was also for the encouragement of his servants, who would go on the more cheerfully in their work, when their master countenanced them so far as to make them a visit. Masters that live at ease should think with tenderness of those that toil for them, and bear the burthen and heat of the day.

(3.) Kind and pious salutations were interchanged between Boaz and his reapers. He said to them, *the Lord be with you,* and they replied *the Lord bless thee,* *ver. 4.* Hereby they expressed, (1.) Their mutual respect to each other, he to them as good servants, and they to him as a good master. When he came to them, he did not fall a chiding them, as if he came only to find fault, and exercise his authority, but he prayed for them, *the Lord be with you,* prosper you, and give you health and strength, and preserve you from any disaster; nor did they as soon as ever he was out of hearing fall a cursing him, as some ill-natured servants that hate their master's eye, but they returned his courtesy, *the Lord bless thee,* and make our labours serviceable to thy prosperity! Things are likely to go on well in a house where there is such good-will as this between masters and servants. (2.) Their joint-dependence upon the divine providence; they expressed their kindness to each other, by praying one for another. They shew not only their courtesy, but their piety, and an acknowledgment, that all good comes from the presence and blessing of God, which therefore we should value and desire above any thing else, both for ourselves and others. Let us from hence learn to use, (1.) Courteous salutations, as expressions of a sincere good-will to our friends. (2.) Pious ejaculations lifting up our hearts to God for his favour, in such short prayers as these. Only we must take heed that they do not degenerate into a formality, lest in them we take the name of the Lord our God in vain, but if we be serious in them, we may in them keep up our communion with God, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. It appears to have been the usual custom, thus to wish reapers good speed, *Psal. cxxix. 7, 8.*

(4.) He took an account from his reapers concerning a stranger he met with in the field, and gave necessary orders concerning her, that they should not touch her, *ver. 9.* nor reproach her, *ver. 15.* Masters must take care, not only that they do not hurt themselves, but that they suffer not their servants, and those under them, to do hurt. He also ordered them to be kind to her, and *let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her;* tho' it is fit masters should restrain and rebuke their servants wastefulness, yet they should not tie them up from being charitable, but give them allowance for that, with prudent directions.

2. Boaz was very kind to Ruth, and shewed her a great deal of favour, induced to it by the account he had of her, and what he observed concerning her, God also inclining his heart to countenance her. Coming among his reapers, he observed this stranger among them, and got intelligence from his steward, who she was, and here is a very particular account of what passed concerning her.

1. The steward gave to Boaz a very fair account of her, proper to recommend her to his favour, *ver. 6, 7.* (1.) That she was a stranger, and therefore one of those that by the law of God were to *gather the gleanings of the harvest*, Lev. xix. 9, 10. She is the Moabitish damsel. (2.) That she was allied to his family; she came back with Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, a kinsman of Boaz. (3.) That she was a proselyte, for she came out of the country of Moab to settle in the land of Israel. (4.) That she was very modest, and had not gleaned till she had asked leave. (5.) That she was very industrious, and had continued close to her work from morning even until now. And the poor that are industrious, and willing to take pains are fit to be encouraged. Now in the heat of the day she tarried a little in the house or booth, that was set up in the field for shelter from the weather, to repose herself, and some suggest, that it is probable she retired for her devotion. But she soon came back to her work, and except that little intermission, has been close at it all day, tho' it was not what she had been used to. Servants should be just in the characters and reports they give to their masters, and take heed they do not misrepresent any person, nor without cause discourage their masters charity.

2. Boaz hereupon was extremely civil to her in divers instances. (1.) He ordered her to attend his reapers in every field they gathered in, and not to glean in another field, for she should not need to go any where else to mend herself, *ver. 8.* *Abide here fast by my maidens*, for those of her own sex were the fittest company for her. (2.) He charged all his servants to be very tender of her, and respectful to her, who, no doubt, would be so to one whom they saw their master kind to. She was a stranger, and, it is probable, her language, dress, and mien, differed much from theirs, but he charged them that they should not in any thing affront her, or be abusive to her, as rude servants are too apt to be to strangers. (3.) He bid her welcome to the entertainment he had provided for his own servants. He ordered her, not only to drink of the water which was drawn for them, for that seems to be the liquor he means, *ver. 9.* drawn from the famous well of Bethlehem, which was by the gate, the water of which David longed for, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15. But at meal-time to come eat of their bread, *ver. 14.* yea, and she should be welcome to their sauce too, *come dip thy morsel in the vinegar*, to make it savoury, for God allows us, not only nourishing, but relishing food, not for necessity only, but for delight. And for encouragement to her, and direction to the servants, he himself happening to be present when the reapers sat down to meat, *reached her parched corn* to eat. It is no disparagement to the finest hand to be *reached forth to the needy*, (Prov. xxxi. 20.) and to be employed in serving the poor. Observe, Boaz was not scanty in his provision for his reapers, but sent them so much more than enough for themselves as would be entertainment for a stranger. Thus *there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth*. (4.) He commended her for her dutiful respects to her mother-in-law, which, tho' he did not know her by sight, yet he had heard of, *ver. 11.* *It has been fully shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law*. Note, those that do well ought to have the praise of it. But that which especially he commended her for, was, that she had left her own country, and was become a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for so the Chaldee expounds it, thou art come to be proselyted, and to dwell among a people which thou knowest not. Those that leave all to embrace the true religion, are worthy of double honour. (5.) He prayed for her, *ver. 12.* *The Lord recompense thy work*. Her strong affection to the commonwealth of Israel, to which she was by birth an alien, was such a work of the divine grace in her, as would certainly be crowned with a full reward, by him, *under whose wings she was come to trust*. Note, Those that by faith come under the wings of the divine grace, and have a full complacency and confidence in that grace, may be sure of a full recompence of reward for their so doing. From this expression the Jews describe a proselyte to be one that is *gathered under the wings of the divine majesty*. Lastly, he encouraged her to go on in her gleaning, and did not offer to take her off from that: for the greatest kindness we can do our poor relations is to assist and encourage their industry. Boaz ordered his servants to let her glean among the sheaves, where other gleaners were not allowed to come, and not to reproach her, i. e. not to call her thief, or to suspect her of taking more than was allowed her, *ver. 15.* All this shews Boaz to be a man of a generous spirit, and one, that, according to the law, considered the heart of a stranger.

3. Ruth received his favours with a great deal of humility and gratitude, and carried herself with as much decency in her place, as he did in his, but little thinking that she should shortly be the mistress of that field she was now gleaning in. (1.) She paid all possible respect to him, and gave him honour, according to the usage of the country, *ver. 10.* *She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground*. Note, Good breeding is a great ornament

to religion; and we must render honour to whom honour is due. (2.) She humbly owned herself unworthy of his favours. *I am a stranger*, *ver. 10.* and *not like one of thy handmaids*, *ver. 13.* not so well dressed, nor so well taught, not so neat, or so handy. Note, It well becomes us all to think meanly of ourselves, and to take notice of that in ourselves which is diminishing, esteeming others better than ourselves. (3.) She gratefully acknowledged his kindness to her, tho' it was no great expence to him, nor much more than what he was obliged to by the divine law, yet she magnifies and admires it, *why have I found grace in thine eyes?* *ver. 10.* She begs the continuance of his good-will, *let me find favour in thy sight*, *ver. 13.* and owns, that what he had said had been a cordial to her, *thou hast comforted me, for that thou hast spoken friendly to me*. Those that are great, and in high places, know not how much good they may do to their inferiors with a kind look, or by speaking friendly to them; and so small an expence, one would think they should not grudge, when it shall be put upon the score of their charity. (4.) When Boaz gave her her dinner with his reapers, she only eat so much as would suffice her, and left the rest; and presently rose up to glean, *ver. 14, 15.* She did not, under pretence either of her want, or of her labour, eat more than was convenient for her, nor so much as to disfit her for her work in the afternoon; temperance is a friend to industry; and we must eat and drink to strengthen us for business, not to indispose us to it.

17. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18. ¶ And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed. 19. And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The mans name with whom I wrought to day, is Boaz. 20. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 21. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. 22. And Naomi said unto Ruth, her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean, unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

Here, 1. Ruth finishes her day's work, *ver. 17.* (1.) She took care not to lose time, for she gleaned until even. We must not be weary of well-doing, because in due season we shall reap. She did not make an excuse to sit still, or go home till the evening; let us *work the works of him that sent us while it is day*. She scarce used, much less did she abuse the kindness of Boaz, for tho' he ordered his servants to leave handfuls for her, she continued to glean the scattered ears. (2.) She took care not to lose what she had gathered, but threshed it herself, that she might the easier carry it home, and might have it ready for use. *The slothful man restoreth not that which he took in hunting*, and so loseth the benefit of it, *but the substance of a diligent man is precious*, Prov. xii. 27. Ruth had gathered it ear by ear, but when she had put it all together, it was an ephah of barley, about four pecks. Many a little makes a great deal. It is an encouragement to industry that in all labour, even that of gleaning, there is profit, but the *talk of the lips tendeth only to penury*. When she had got her corn into as little compass as she could, she took it up herself, and carried it into the city, tho' had she asked them, it is likely, some of Boaz's servants would have done that for her. We should study to be as little as possible troublesome to those that are kind to us. She did not think it either too hard, or too mean a service to carry her corn herself into the city, but was rather pleased with what she had got by her own industry and careful to secure it; and let us thus take care that we *lose not those things which we have wrought*, which we have gained, 2 John 8.

2. She paid her respects to her mother-in-law. Went straight home to her, and did not go to jangle with Boaz's servants; shewed her what she had gleaned, that she might see, she had not been idle.

1. She entertained her, with what she had left of the good dinner Boaz had given her. She gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed, *ver. 18.* which refers to *ver. 14.* If she had any thing better than other, her mother should have part with her. Thus having shewed industry abroad, she shewed piety at home; so childrens maintaining their parents is called, 1 Tim. v. 4. and it is part of the honour due to them by the fifth commandment, Mat. xv. 6.

2. She

2. She gave her an account of her day's work, and how a kind providence had favoured her in it, which made it very comfortable to her; for the gleanings that a righteous man hath, are better than the harvests of many wicked, *Psal. xxxvii. 16.*

1. Naomi asked her where she had been. *Where hast thou gleaned to day?* Note, Parents should take care to inquire into the ways of their children, how, and where, and in what company, they spend their time. This may prevent many extravagancies which children, left to themselves, run into, by which they bring both themselves and their parents to shame. If we are not our brethrens, yet sure we are our childrens keepers: and we know what a son Adonijah proved that had never been chidden. Parents should examine their children, not to frighten or discourage them, so as to make them hate home, or tempt them to tell a lie, but to commend them if they have done well, and with mildness to reprove and caution them, if they have done otherwise. It is a good question for us to ask our selves in the close of every day, *where have I gleaned to day?* What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace? what have I done or got, that will turn to a good account?

2. Ruth gave her a particular account of the kindness she had received from Boaz, *ver. 19.* and the hopes she had of further kindness from him, he having ordered her to attend his servants throughout all the harvest, *ver. 21.* Note, Children should look upon themselves as accountable to their parents, and to those that are over them; and not think it a disparagement to them to be examined, but let them *do that which is good*, and they shall have praise of the same. Ruth told her mother what kindness Boaz had shewed her, that she might take some occasion or another to acknowledge it, and return him thanks; but she did not tell her how Boaz had commended her, *ver. 11.* Humility teacheth us not only not to praise our selves, but not to be forward to publish others praises of us.

3. We are here told what Naomi said to it. (1.) She prayed heartily for him that had been her daughter's benefactor, even before she knew who it was, *ver. 19. Blessed be he*, whoever he was, *that did take knowledge of thee*; shooting the arrow of prayer at a venture. But more particularly, when she was told who it was, *ver. 20. Blessed be he of the Lord.* Note, The poor must pray for those that are kind and liberal to them, and thus requite them, when they are not capable of making them any other requital. Let the *kins of the poor bless* those that refresh them, *Job xxix. 13.—xxxii. 20.* And he that hears the cries of the poor against their oppressors, *Ecc. xxii. 27.* it may be hoped, will hear the prayers of the poor for their benefactors. She now remembered the former kindnesses Boaz had shewed to her husband and sons, and joins those to this; he has not *left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.* If we generously shew kindness even to those that seem to have forgotten our former favours; perhaps it may help to revive the remembrance, even of them, which seemed buried.

(2.) She acquainted Ruth with the relation their family was in to Boaz. *The man is near of kin to us*; it should seem she had been so long in Moab, that she had forgot her kindred in the land of Israel, till by this providence God brought it to her mind. At least, she had not told Ruth of it, tho' it might have been some encouragement to a young proselyte. Unlike to humble Naomi are many, who tho' fallen into decay themselves, are continually bragging of their great relations. Nay, Observe the chain of thought here, and in it a chain of providences, bringing about what was designed concerning Ruth: Ruth names Boaz as one that had been kind to her; Naomi bethinks her self who that should be, and presently-recollects her self, *the man is near of kin to us*, now I hear his name, I remember him very well. This thought brings in another; he is *our next kinsman*; our Goel that has the right to redeem our estate that was mortgaged, and therefore from him we may expect further kindness. That is the likeliest man in all Bethlehem to set us up. Thus God brings things to our mind, sometimes of a sudden, that prove to have a wonderful tendency to our good.

(3.) She appointed Ruth to continue her attendance in the fields of Boaz, *ver. 22. Let them not meet thee in any other field*, for that will be construed a contempt of his courtesy. Our blessed Saviour is our Goel, it is he that has right to redeem, if we expect to receive benefit by him, let us closely adhere to him, and his fields, and his family; let us not go to the world, and its fields, for that which is to be had with him only, and which he has encouraged us to expect from him. Has the Lord dealt bountifully with us? let us not be found in any other field, nor seek for happiness and satisfaction in the creature. Tradesmen take it ill, if those that are in their books go to another shop. We lose divine favours if we flight them. Some think Naomi gave her daughter-in-law a smart rebuke, she had spoke, *ver. 21. of keeping fast by the young men*; nay, saith Naomi, *ver. 22. It is good that thou go out with his maidens*, they are siter company for thee than the young men. But they are too critical; Ruth spoke of the young men, because they were the principal labourers, and to them Boaz had given directions concerning her: and Naomi takes it for granted, while she attended the young men, her society would be with the maidens, as was fit.

Ruth dutifully observed her mother's directions; she continued to glean; to the end not only of barley-harvest, but of the

wheat-harvest which followed it, that she might gather food in harvest to serve for winter, *Prov. vi. 6, 7.* She also kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, with whom she afterwards cultivated an acquaintance, which might do her service, *ver. 23.* But she constantly came to her mother at night in due time, as became a virtuous woman, that was for working days, and not for merry nights. And when the harvest was ended, (as bishop Patrick expounds it) she did not gad abroad, but kept her old mother company at home. Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, and we know what a disgrace her vanity ended in; Ruth kept home, and helped to maintain her mother, and went out on no other errand, but to get provision for her, and we shall find afterwards what preferment her humility and industry ended in. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business?* Honour is before him.

C H A P. III.

We found it very easy in the former chapter, to applaud the decency of Ruth's carriage, and to shew what good use we may make of the account given us of it; but in this chapter we shall have much ado to vindicate it, and to clear it, from the imputation of indecency, and to save it from having an ill use made of it: but the goodness of those times was such, as saves this here from being ill done, and yet the badness of these times is such, as that it will not justify any now in doing the like. Here is, (1.) The directions Naomi gave to her daughter-in-law, how to claim Boaz for her husband, ver. 1—5. (2.) Ruth's punctual observance of those directions, ver. 6, 7. (3.) The kind and honourable treatment Boaz gave her, ver. 8—15. (4.) Her return to her mother-in-law, ver. 16—18.

1. **T**HEN Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 2. And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing-floor. 3. Wash thy self therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thy self known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 4. And it shall be when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. 5. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me, I will do.

Here, 1. Naomi's care for her daughter's comfort is without doubt very commendable, and is recorded for imitation. She had no thoughts of marrying her self, *chap. i. 12.* But tho' she that was old, had resolved upon a perpetual widowhood, yet she was far from the thoughts of confining her daughter-in-law to it that was young. Age must not make it self a standard to youth. On the contrary, she is full of contrivance how to get her well married. Her wisdom projected that for her daughter, which her daughter's modesty forbade her to project for her self, *ver. 1.* This she did (1.) In justice to the dead, to raise up seed to them that were gone, and so to preserve the family from being extinct. (2.) In kindness and gratitude to her daughter-in-law, who had carried her self very dutifully and respectfully to her. *My daughter*, (saith she, looking upon her in all respects as her own) *shall I not seek rest for thee*, i. e. a settlement in the married state, shall I not get thee a good husband, *that it may be well with thee*, i. e. that thou mayest live plentifully and pleasantly, and not spend all thy days in this mean and melancholy condition we now live in. Note, 1. A married state is or should be a state of rest to young people; wandering affections are then fixed, and the heart must be at rest: it is rest in the house of a husband, and in his heart, *chap. i. 9.* Those are giddy indeed, that marriage doth not compose. 2. That which should be desired and designed by those that enter into the married state is, *that it may be well with them*; in order to which, it is necessary that they choose well, otherwise instead of being a rest to them, it may prove the greatest uneasiness. Parents in disposing of their children must have this in their eye, *that it may be well with them.* And be it always remembered, that *that is best for us, which is best for our souls.* 3. It is the duty of parents to seek this rest for their children, and to do all that is fit for them to do, in due time, in order to it. And the more dutiful and respectful they are to them, tho' they can the worse spare them, yet they should the rather prefer them, and the better.

2. The course she took in order to her daughter's preferment was very odd, and looks suspicious. If there were any thing ill in it, the fault must lay upon Naomi, who put her daughter upon it, and who knew or should know the laws and usages of Israel better than Ruth. (1.) It was true, that Boaz being near of kin to the deceased, and (for ought Naomi knew to the contrary) the nearest of all now alive, was obliged by the divine law to marry the widow of Mahlon, who was the eldest son of Elimelech, and was dead without issue, *ver. 2. Is not Boaz of our kindred?* and therefore bound in conscience to take care of our affairs? why should

should we not mind him of his duty? This may encourage us to lay our selves by faith at the feet of Christ; that he is our near kinsman, having taken our nature upon him, he is *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*. (2.) It was a convenient time to mind him of it, now he had got so much acquaintance with Ruth, by her constant attendance on his reapers during the whole harvest which was now ended; and he also, by the kindness he had shewed to Ruth in lesser matters, had encouraged Naomi to hope that he would not be unkind, much less unjust, in this greater. And she thought it was a good opportunity to apply to him, when he made a winnowing-feast at his threshing-floor, *ver. 2.* then and there compleating the joy of his harvest, and treating his workmen like a kind master, *he winnoweth barley to night*, i. e. he makes his entertainment to night; as Nabal and Absalom had feasts at their sheep-shearing, so Boaz at his winnowing. (3.) Naomi thought Ruth the most proper person to do it her self; and perhaps it was the usage in that country, that in this case the woman should make the demand, so much is intimated by the law, *Deut. xxv. 7, 8, 9.* Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make her self clean and neat, not to make her self fine, *ver. 3. Wash thy self, and anoint thee*, not paint thee, as Jezebel, put on thy raiment, but not the attire of the harlot, and go down to the floor, whither, it is probable, she was invited to the supper there made; but she must not make her self known, i. e. not make her errand known, (otherwise she her self could not but be very well known among Boaz's reapers) till the company was dispersed, and Boaz was retired. And upon this occasion, she would have an easier access to him in private, than she could have at his own house. And thus far was well enough. But, (4.) Her coming to lie down at his feet, when he was asleep in his bed, had such an appearance of evil, was such an approach towards it, and might have been such an occasion of it, that we know not well how to justify it. Many expositors think it unjustifiable, particularly the excellent Mr Pool, we must not do evil that good may come. It is dangerous bringing the spark and the tinder together, for how great a matter may a little fire kindle. All agree, that it is not to be drawn into a precedent, neither our laws nor our times are the same, that were then, yet here I am willing to make the best of it. If Boaz was, as they presumed, the next kinsman, she was his wife before God (as we say) and there needed but little ceremony to compleat the nuptials; and Naomi did not intend that Ruth should approach to him any otherwise than as his wife, she knew Boaz to be not only an old man (she would not have trusted to that alone, in venturing her daughter-in-law so near him) but a grave sober man, a virtuous and religious man, and one that feared God. She knew Ruth to be a modest woman, *chaste and a keeper at home*, Tit. ii. 5. The Israelites had indeed been once debauched by the daughters of Moab, *Numb. xxv. 1.* But this Moabitess was none of those daughters. Naomi her self designed nothing but what was honest and honourable, and her charity (which *believeth all things, and hopeth all things*) banished and forbad all suspicion, that either Boaz or Ruth would offer any thing, but what was likewise honest and honourable. If what she advised, had been then as indecent and immodest (according to the usage of the country) as it seems now to us, we cannot think that if Naomi had had so little virtue (which yet we have no reason to suspect) that she should have had so little wisdom as to put her daughter upon it, since that alone might have marred the match, and have alienated the affections of so grave and good a man as Boaz from her. We must therefore conclude, the thing did not look so ill then as it doth now. Naomi referred her daughter-in-law to Boaz for further directions. When she had thus made her claim, Boaz, who was more learned in the laws, would tell her what she must do. Thus must we lay our selves at the feet of our Redeemer, to receive from him our doom, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue, and too much sense, to promise as she did, *ver. 5. All that thou sayest unto me will I do.* Thus must the younger submit to the elder, and to their grave and prudent counsels, when they have nothing worth speaking of, to object against it.

6. ¶ And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. 7. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. 8. ¶ And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and behold, a woman lay at his feet. 9. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman. 10. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. 11. And now, my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for

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all the city of my people doth know, that thou art a virtuous woman. 12. And now it is true, that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. 13. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman well, let him do the kinsmans part; but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

Here is, 1. Boaz's good management of his common affairs, it is probable, according to the common usage. (1.) When his servants winnowed he was with them, and had his eye upon them, to prevent not only their stealing any of his corn, he had no reason to fear that, but their waste of it thro' carelessness, in the winnowing of it. Masters may sustain great losses by servants that are heedless, tho' they be honest, which is a reason why men should be diligent to *know the state of their own flocks*, and look well to them. (2.) When he had more than ordinary work to be done, he treated his servants with extraordinaries, and for their encouragement, did *eat and drink with them*. It well becomes those that are rich and great, to be generous to, and yet to be familiar with, those that are under them, and employed for them. (3.) When Boaz had supped with his workmen, and been a while pleasant with them, he went to bed in due time, so early, that by midnight he had his first sleep, (*ver. 8.*) and thus he would be fit for his business betimes next morning. All that are good husbands, will keep good hours, and not indulge themselves or their families in unseasonable mirth. The Chaldee paraphrase tells us, *ver. 7.* that Boaz eat and drank, and his heart was good, (and so the Hebrew word is) and he blessed the name of the Lord, who had heard his prayers, and taken away the famine from the land of Israel. So that he went sober to bed, his heart was in a good frame, and not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. And he did not go to bed without prayer. Now he had eaten, and was full, he blessed the Lord, and now he was going to rest, committed himself to the divine protection; it was well he did, for he had an unusual temptation before him, tho' he knew not of it. (4.) He had his bed or couch laid at the end of the heap of corn; not because he had set his heart upon it, nor only that he might tend and keep it safe from thieves, but it was too late to go home to the city, and here he would be near his work, and ready for it next morning, and he would shew, that he was not nice or curious in his lodging, neither took state, nor consulted his ease, but was, like his father Jacob, a plain man, that, when there was occasion, could make his bed in a barn, and, if need were, sleep contentedly in the straw.

2. Ruth's good assurance in the management of her affair. She observed her mother's orders, went and laid her down, not by his side, but overcross his bed's feet, in her clothes, and kept awake, waiting for an opportunity to tell her errand. When he waked in the night, and perceived there was some body at his feet, and enquired who it was, she told him her name, and then her errand, *ver. 9.* that she came to put her self under his protection, as the person appointed by the divine law to be her protector. *Thou art he, that has right to redeem a family, and an estate from perishing, and therefore let this ruin be under thine hand: and spread thy skirt over me*, be pleased to espouse me and my cause. Thus must we by faith, apply our selves to Jesus Christ, as our next kinsman that is able to redeem us, come under his wings, as we are invited, (*Mat. xxiii. 37.*) and beg of him to *spread his skirt over us*. Lord Jesus, take me into thy covenant, and under thy care: *I am oppressed, undertake for me.*

3. The good acceptance Ruth gained with Boaz. What she did had no ill effect, either one way or other, so that Naomi was not mistaken in her good opinion of her kinsman. He knew her demand was just and honourable, and treated her accordingly, and did not deal with his sister, as with a harlot, *Gen. xxxiv. 31.* For (1.) He did not offer to violate her chastity, tho' he had all the opportunity that could be for it. The Chaldee paraphrase, thus descants upon it, He subdued his concupiscence, and did not approach to her, but did as Joseph the just, who would not come near to his Egyptian mistress, and as Phaltiel the Pious, who when Saul gave him Michal, David's wife, (*1 Sam. xxv. 44.*) put a sword between himself and her, that he might not touch her. Boaz knew it was not any sinful lust that brought her thither, and therefore bravely maintained both his own honour and her's. (2.) He did not put any ill construction upon what she did, did not reproach her as an impudent woman, and unfit to make an honest man a wife; she having approved her self well in his fields, and all her carriage having been modest and decent, he would not from this instance entertain the least suspicion of her character, or seem to do so; perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to these distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter in law, *She is more righteous than I.*

But, on the contrary, (1.) He commended her, spoke kindly to her, called her his daughter, and spoke honourably of her, as a woman of eminent virtue. She had shewed in this instance more kindness to her mother-in-law, and to the family into which she had matched, than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave

leave her own country, and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and help to maintain her, for this he had blessed her, *chap. ii. 11.* but now he saith, thou hast *showed more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning, ver. 10.* in that she consulted not her own fancy, but her husband's family, in marrying again. She received not the addresses of young men (much less did she seek them) *whether poor or rich,* but was willing to marry as the law directed, tho' it were to an old man, because it was for the honour and interest of the family into which she had matched, and for which she had an entire kindness. Young people must aim in disposing themselves not so much to please their own eye, as to please God and their parents.

(2.) He promised her marriage, *ver. 11. fear not* that I will slight thee, or expose thee; no, *I will do all that thou requirest,* for it is the same that the law requires, from the next of kin, and I have no reason to decline it, *for all the city of my people doth know, that thou art a virtuous woman, ver. 11.* Note, 1. Exemplary virtue ought to have its due praise, (*Phil. iv. 8.*) and it will recommend both men and women to the esteem of the wisest and best. Ruth was a poor woman, and poverty oft obscures the lustre of virtue, yet Ruth's virtues, even in a mean condition, were generally taken notice of; and could not be hid; nay, her virtues took away the reproach of her poverty; if poor people be but good people, they shall have honour from God and man. Ruth had been remarkable for her humility, which paved the way to this honour; the less she proclaimed her own goodness, the more did her neighbours take notice of it. 2. In the choice of yoke-fellows, virtue should especially be regarded, known approved virtue; let religion determine the choice, and it will certainly crown the choice and make it comfortable. *Wisdom is better than gold,* and when it is said to be *good with an inheritance,* the meaning is, that an inheritance is worth little without it.

(3.) He made his promise conditional, and could not do otherwise, for it seems there was a kinsman that was nearer than he, to whom the right of redemption did belong, *ver. 12.* This he knew, but we may reasonably suppose Naomi (who had been long abroad, and could not be exact in the pedigree of her husband's family) was ignorant of it, otherwise she would never have sent her daughter to make her claim of Boaz. Yet he doth not bid her go her self to this other kinsman, that had been to put too great a hardship upon her. But he promiseth, (1.) That he would himself propose it to the other kinsman, and know his mind. The Hebrew word for a widow signifies, *one that is dumb,* Boaz will therefore *open his mouth for the dumb,* Prov. xxxi. 8. and will say that for this widow, which she knew not how to say for her self. (2.) That if the other kinsman refused to do the kinsman's part, he would do it; would marry the widow, redeem the land, and so repair the family. This promise he backs with a solemn oath, for it was a conditional contract of marriage, *ver. 13. as the Lord liveth.* Thus keeping the matter in suspense, he bid her wait till morning. Bishop Hall thus sums up this matter in his contemplations. "Boaz instead of touching her as a wanton, blesteth her as a father, encourageth her as a friend, promiseth her as a kinsman, rewards her as a patron, and sends her away laden with hopes and gifts, no less chaste, more happy than she came. O admirable temperance, worthy the progenitor of him, in whose lips and heart there was no guile!"

14. ¶ And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. 15. Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. 16. And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. 17. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. 18. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

We are here told,

1. How Ruth was dismissed by Boaz. It had not been safe for her to go home in the dead of the night, therefore *she lay at his feet* (not by his side) *until morning,* but as soon as ever the day broke, that she had light to go home by, she got away, *before one could know another,* that if she were seen, yet she might not be known to be abroad so unseasonably. She was not shy of being known to be a gleaner in the field, nor ashamed of that mark of her poverty. But she would not willingly be known to be a night-walker, for her virtue was her greatest honour, and that which she most valued.

Boaz dismisseth her, (1.) With a charge to keep counsel, *ver. 14. Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor,* and lay all night so near to Boaz, for tho' they needed not to care much, what people said of them, while they were both conscious to themselves, of an unspotted purity, yet because few could have come

so near the fire as they did, and not have been scorched. Had it been known, it would have occasioned suspicions in some, and reflections from others; good people would have been troubled, and ill people would have triumphed, and therefore *let it not be known.* Note, We must always take care, not only to keep a good conscience, but to keep a good name: either we must not do that, which, tho' innocent, is liable to be misinterpreted, or if we do, we must not *let it be known.* We must not only avoid sin, but scandal. There was likewise a particular reason for concealment here, if this matter should take wind, it might prejudice the freedom of the other kinsman's election: And he would make this his reason for refusing Ruth, that Boaz and she had been together. (2.) He dismisseth her with a good present of corn, which would be very acceptable to her poor mother at home, and an evidence for her that he had not sent her away in dislike, which Naomi might have suspected, if he had sent her away empty. He gave it her in her vail, or apron, or mantle; gave it her by measure; like a prudent corn-master, he kept an account of all he delivered out; it was *six measures,* i. e. six omers, as is supposed, ten of which made an ephah; whatever the measure was, it is likely he gave her as much as she could well carry, *ver. 15.* And the Chaldee saith, *Strength was given her from the Lord to carry it;* and adds, that now it was told her by the spirit of prophecy, That from her should descend six of the most righteous men of their age, viz. David, Daniel, his three companions, and the king Messiah.

2. How she was welcomed by her mother-in-law. She asked her, *Who art thou, my daughter?* Art thou a bride or no? Must I give thee joy! So Ruth told her how the matter stood, and where it stuck, *ver. 16, 17.* Whereupon her mother (1.) Advised her to be satisfied in what was done. *Sit still, my daughter, till thou know how the matter will fall, ver. 18.* How it is decreed in heaven, so the Chaldee reads it, for marriages are made there. She had done all that was fit for her to do, and now she must patiently wait the issue, and not be perplexed about it. Let us learn hence, to cast our care upon providence to follow that, and attend the motions of it, composing our selves into an expectation of the event, with a resolution to acquiesce in it, whatever it be, sometimes that proves best done for us, that is least our own doing; *sit still therefore, and see how the matter will fall,* and say, Let it fall how it will, I am ready for it. (2.) She assured her that Boaz having undertaken this matter, would approve himself a faithful careful friend, *He will not be at rest, till he have finished the matter.* Tho' it was a busy time with him in his fields and his floor, yet having undertaken to serve his friend, he would not neglect the business. Naomi believes that Ruth has won his heart, and that therefore he will not be easy till he knows whether she be his or no. This she gives as a reason why Ruth should sit still and not perplex her self about it, that Boaz had undertaken it, and he would be sure to manage it well. Much more reason have good Christians to be careful for nothing, but cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them: And what need we care if he do? *Sit still, and see how the matter will fall, for the Lord will perfect that which concerns thee,* and will make it to work for good to thee, *Psal. xxxviii. 4, 5. Your strength is to sit still, Isa. xxx. 7.*

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter we have the wedding between Boaz and Ruth, in the circumstances of which there was something uncommon, which is kept upon record, for the illustration, not only of the law, concerning the marrying of a brother's widow, Deut. xxv. 5, &c. For cases help to expound laws, but of the gospel too, for from this marriage descended David, and the son of David, whose espousals to the Gentile church were hereby typified. We are here told, (1.) How Boaz got clear of his rival, and fairly shook him off, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) How his marriage with Ruth was publicly solemnized, and attended with the good wishes of his neighbours, *ver. 9—12.* (3.) The happy issue that descended from this marriage. Obed, the grandfather of David, *ver. 13—17.* And so the book concludes with the pedigree of David, *ver. 18—22.* Perhaps it was to oblige him, that the blessed Spirit directed the inserting this story into the sacred canon, he being desirous that the virtues of his great-grandmother, Ruth, together with her Gentile extraction, should be transmitted to posterity, and the singular providences that attended her.

1. **T**HEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake, came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one, turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi that is come again out of the country of Moab selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's. 4. And I thought to advertise thee, saying, buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it; then tell me that

that I may know: for *there is none to redeem it* besides thee, and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. 5. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. 6. ¶ And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for my self, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thy self, for I cannot redeem it. 7. Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel, concerning redeeming, and concerning changing, for to confirm all things: a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this *was* a testimony in Israel. 8. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee: so he drew off his shoe.

Here, 1. Boaz calls a court immediately. It is probable he was himself one of the elders (or aldermen) of the city, for he was a mighty man of wealth, perhaps he was father of the city, and sat chief, for he seems here to have gone up to the gate, as one having authority, and not as a common person, like Job, chap. xxx. 7, &c. We cannot suppose him less than a magistrate in his city, who was grandson to Nahshon, prince of Judah; and his lying at the end of a heap of corn in the threshing-floor the night before, was not at all inconsistent in those days of plainness, with the honour of his fitting judge in the gate. But why was Boaz so hasty, why so fond of the match? Ruth was not rich, but lived upon alms, not honourable, but a poor stranger, she is never said to be beautiful, if ever she had been so, we may suppose that weeping, and travelling, and gleanings, had withered her lilies and roses. But that which made Boaz in love with her, and solicitous to expedite the affair, was, that all her neighbours agreed, she was a virtuous woman, this set her with him *far above rubies*, Prov. xxxi. 10. And therefore he thinks, if by marrying her he might do her a real kindness, he should also do himself a very great kindness; he will therefore bring it to a head presently. It was not court-day, but he got ten men of the elders of the city to meet him in the town-hall over the gate, where publick business used to be transacted, ver. 2. So many, it is likely, by the custom of the city, made a full court. Boaz, tho' a judge, would not be judge in his own cause, but desired the concurrence of other elders. Honest intentions dread not a publick cognizance.

2. He summons his rival to come and hear the matter that was to be proposed to him, ver. 1. *Ho, such a one*, sit down here. He called him by his name, no doubt, but the divine historian thought not fit to record it, for because he refused to raise up the name of the dead, he desired not to have his name preserved to future-ages in this history. Providence favoured Boaz in ordering it so, that this kinsman should come by thus opportunely, just when the matter was ready to be proposed to him. Great affairs are sometimes much furthered by small circumstances, which facilitate and expedite them.

3. He proposeth to the other kinsman the redemption of Naomi's land, which, it is probable, had been mortgaged for money to buy bread with, when the famine was in the land, ver. 3. *Naomi has a parcel of land to sell*, viz. the equity of the redemption of it out of the hands of the mortgagee, which she is willing to part with; or, as some think, it was her jointure for her life, and wanting money, for a small matter she would sell her interest to the heir at law, who was fittest to be the purchaser. This he gives the kinsman legal notice of, ver. 4. that he might have the refusal of it. Whoever had it must pay for it, and Boaz might have said, my money is as good as my kinsman's, if I have a mind to it, why may not I buy it privately, since I had the first offer of it. And say nothing to my kinsman; no, Boaz, tho' fond enough of the purchase, would not do so mean a thing, as to take a bargain over another man's head, that was nearer akin to it: and we are taught by his example, to be not only just and honest, but fair and honourable in all our dealings, and to do nothing which we are unwilling should see the light, but be above-board.

4. The kinsman seemed forward to redeem the land, till he was told, that if he did that, he must marry the widow, and then he flew off. He liked the land well enough, and probably caught at that the more greedily, because he hoped that the poor widow being under a necessity of selling, he might have so much the better bargain; *I will redeem it* (saith he) with all my heart, thinking it would be a fine addition to his estate, ver. 4. But Boaz told him there was a young widow in the case, and if he have the land, he must take her with it, *terra transit cum onere*, either the divine law or the usage of the country would oblige him to it, or Naomi insisted upon it, that she should not sell the land, but upon this condition, ver. 5. Some think this doth not relate to that law of marrying the brother's widow, for that seems to oblige only the children of the same father, Deut. xxv. 5. unless by custom it was afterwards made to extend to the next of kin; but that this refers to the law of redemption of inheritances, Lev. xxv. 24, 25. for it is a Goel, a redeemer that is here enquired for,

and if so, it was not by the law, but by Naomi's own resolution, that the purchaser was to marry the widow. However it was, this kinsman, when he heard the conditions of the bargain, refused it, ver. 6. *I cannot redeem it for myself*, I will not meddle with it upon these terms, lest I mar my own inheritance; the land he thought would be an improvement of his inheritance, but not the land with the woman, that would mar it: Perhaps, he thought it would be a disparagement to him to marry such a poor widow that was come from a strange country, and almost lived upon alms: he fancied it would be a blemish to his family, it would mar his blood, and disgrace his posterity: Her eminent virtues were not sufficient in his eye to balance this. The Chaldee paraphrase makes his reason for this refusal, to be, that he had another wife, and if he should take Ruth, it might occasion strife and contention in his family, and that would mar the comfort of his inheritance. Or, he thought she might bring him a great many children, and they would all expect shares out of his estate, which would scatter it into too many hands, so that his family would make the less figure. This makes many shy of the great redemption, they are not willing to espouse religion, they have heard well of it, and have nothing to say against it, they will give it their good word, but at the same time they will give their good word with it; they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be glad of, but holiness they cannot dispense with, it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused, and therefore let who will purchase heaven at that rate, they cannot.

5. The right of redemption is fairly resigned to Boaz; if this nameless kinsman lost a good bargain, a good estate, and a good wife too, he may thank himself for not considering it better, and Boaz will thank himself for making his way clear to that which he valued, and desired above any thing. In those antient times it was not the usage to pass estates by writings, as afterwards, Jer. xxxii. 10, &c. but by some sign or ceremony, as with us by livery and seisin, as we commonly call it, that is, the delivery of seisin, seisin of a house by giving the key, of land by giving turf and a twig. The ceremony here used, was, he that surrendered, *plucked off his shoe* (the Chaldee saith, it was *the glove of his right-hand*), and gave it to him to whom he made the surrender, intimating thereby, that whatever right he had to tread, or go upon the land, he conveyed and transferred it, upon a valuable consideration to the purchaser: This was a *testimony in Israel*, ver. 7. And it was done in this case, ver. 8. If this kinsman was obliged by the law to have married Ruth, and his refusal had been a contempt of that law, Ruth must have *plucked off his shoe*, and *spit in his face*, Deut. xxv. 9. But tho' his relation should in some measure oblige him to the duty, yet the distance of his relation might serve to excuse him from the penalty, or Ruth might very well dispense with it, since his refusal was all she desired from him. But bishop Patrick, and the best interpreters, think this had no relation to that law, and that the drawing off of the shoe, was not any disgrace, as there, but a confirmation of the surrender, and an evidence that it was not fraudulent, or surreptitiously obtained. Note, Fair and open dealings in all matters of contract and commerce, is what all those must make conscience of, that would approve themselves Israelites indeed, without guile. How much more honourably and honestly doth Boaz come by this purchase, than if he had secretly undermined his kinsman, and privately clapped up a bargain with Naomi, unknown to him. Honesty will be found the best policy.

9. ¶ And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelechs, and all that *was* Chilion and Mahlons, of the hand of Naomi. 10. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. 11. And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders said, *We are witnesses*: the LORD make the woman that is come into thine house, like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem. 12. And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, (whom Tamar bare unto Judah) of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

Boaz now sees his way clear, and therefore delays not to perform his promise made to Ruth, that he would do the kinsman's part, but in the gate of his city, before the elders and all the people, publisheth a marriage-contract between himself, and Ruth the Moabitess, and therewith the purchase of all the estate that belonged to the family of Elimelech. If he had not been, (chap. ii. 1.) *a mighty man of wealth*, he could not have compassed this redemption, nor done this service to his kinsman's family. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good in his generation, and especially those of his own household, if he have but a heart to use it so.

Now concerning this marriage, it appears,

1. That it was solemnized, or at least published, before many witnesses, *ver. 9, 10.* Ye are witnesses, (1.) That I have bought the estate, whoever has it, or any part of it mortgaged to them, let them come to me and they shall have their money, according to the value of the land, which was computed by the number of years, to the year of jubilee, (*Lev. xxv. 15.*) when it would have returned of course to Elimelech's family. The more publick the sales of estates are, the better they are guarded against frauds. (2.) That I have purchased the widow to be my wife; he had no portion with her, what jointure she had was encumbered, and he could not have it without giving as much for it as it was worth, and therefore he might well say, he purchased her, and yet being a virtuous woman, he reckoned he had a good bargain. *House and riches are the inheritance of fathers*, but a prudent wife is more valuable, is from the Lord as a special gift. He designed in marrying her to preserve the memory of the dead, that the name of Mahlon, tho' he left no son to bear it up, might not be cut off from the gate of his place, but by this means might be preserved, that it should be inserted in the publick register, that Boaz married Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, which posterity, whenever they had occasion to consult the register, would take particular notice of. And this history being preserved for the sake of that marriage, and the issue of it, that proved an effectual means to perpetuate the name of Mahlon, even beyond the thought or intention of Boaz, to the world's end. And, observe, that because that Boaz did this honour to the dead, as well as this kindness to the living, God did him the honour to bring him into the genealogy of the Messiah, by which his family was dignified above all the families of Israel; while the other kinsman, that was so much afraid of diminishing himself, and marring his inheritance, by marrying the widow, has his name, family, and inheritance, buried in oblivion and disgrace. A tender and generous concern for the honour of the dead, and the comfort of poor widows and strangers, neither of which can return the kindness, (*Luke xiv. 14.*) is what God will be well pleased with, and will surely recompense. Our Lord Jesus is our Goel, our Redeemer, our everlasting Redeemer, he looked like Boaz, with compassion on the deplorable state of fallen mankind; at a vast expence he redeemed the heavenly inheritance for us, which by sin was mortgaged, and forfeited into the hands of divine justice; and which we could never have been able to redeem: He likewise purchased a peculiar people, whom he would espouse to himself, tho' strangers and foreigners, like Ruth, poor and despised, that the name of that dead and buried race might not be cut off for ever. He ventured the marring of his own inheritance to do this, for tho' he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, but he was abundantly recompensed for it by his Father, who, because he thus humbled himself, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. Let us own our obligations to him, make sure our contract with him, and study all our days how to do him honour.

Boaz by making a publick declaration of this marriage and purchase, not only secured his title against all pretenders, as it were by a fine with proclamations, but put honour upon Ruth, shewed that he was not ashamed of her, and her parentage and poverty, and left a testimony against clandestine marriages. It is only that which is evil that hates the light, and comes not to it. Boaz called witnesses to what he did, for it was what he could justify, and would never disown, and such regard was then had, even to the contemned crowd, that not only the elders, but all the people that were in the gate, passing and re-passing, were appealed to, *ver. 9.* and hearkned to, *ver. 11.* when they said, *we are witnesses.*

2. That it was attended with many prayers. The elders, and all the people when they witnessed to it, wished well to it, and blessed it, *ver. 11, 12.* Ruth, it should seem, was now sent for, for they speak of her, *ver. 12.* as present, *this young woman*; and he having taken her to wife, they look upon her as already come into his house. And very heartily they pray for the new married couple. The senior elder, it is likely, made this prayer, and the rest of the elders, with the people, joined in it, and therefore it is spoken of, as made by them all: for in publick prayers, tho' but one speaks, we must all pray. Observe, (1.) Marriages ought to be blessed, and accompanied with prayer, because every creature, and every condition is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. It is civil and friendly, to wish all happiness to those who enter into that condition, and what good we desire, we should pray for, from the fountain of all good. The minister who gives himself to the word and prayer, as he is the fittest person to exhort, so he is the fittest to bless and pray for those that enter into this relation. (2.) We ought to desire and pray for the welfare and prosperity one of another, so far from envying or grieving at it. Now here,

1. They pray for Ruth. *The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house, like Rachel and Leah*, i. e. God make her a good wife, and a fruitful mother. Ruth was a virtuous woman, and she needed the prayers of her friends, that by the grace of God she might be made a blessing to the family she was come into. They might be like Rachel and Leah, rather than like Sarah and Rebekah, for Sarah had but one son, and Rebekah but one

that was in covenant, the other was Esau, who was rejected, but Rachel and Leah did *build up the house of Israel*, all their children were in the church, and their off-spring was numerous. May she be a flourishing, fruitful, faithful, *vine by thy house side.*

2. They pray for Boaz, that he might continue to do worthily in the city, to which he was an ornament, and might there be more and more famous. They desire that the wife might be a blessing to the house, in the private affairs of that; and the husband a blessing to the town, in the publick business of that; that she in her place, and he in his, might be wise, virtuous, and successful. Observe, The way to be famous, is to do worthily. Great reputation must be got by great merits. It is not enough not to do unworthily, to be harmless and inoffensive, but we must do worthily, be useful and serviceable to our generation; they that would be truly illustrious, must in their places shine as lights.

3. They pray for the family; *let thy house be like the house of Pharez*, i. e. let it be very numerous, let it greatly increase and multiply, as the house of Pharez did. The Bethlehemites were of the house of Pharez, and knew very well how numerous it was; in the distribution of the tribes, that grandson of Jacob had the honour which none of the rest had but Manasseh and Ephraim, that his posterity was subdivided into two distinct families, Hezron, and Hamul, *Numb. xxvi. 21.* Now they pray that the family of Boaz, which was one branch of that stock, might in process of time become as numerous and great as the whole stock now was.

13. ¶ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. 16. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18. ¶ Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, 19. And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20. And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21. And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22. And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

Here is, 1. Ruth a wife, Boaz took her, with the usual solemnities, to his house, and *she became his wife*, *ver. 13.* All the city, no doubt, congratulating the preferment of a virtuous woman, purely for her virtues. We have reason to think that Orpah, who returned from Naomi to her people, and her gods, was never half so well preferred as Ruth was. He that forsakes all for Christ, shall find more than all with him; it shall be recompensed a hundred fold in this present time. Now Orpah wished she had gone with Naomi too; but she, like the other kinsman, stood in her own light. Boaz had prayed that this pious proselyte might receive a full reward of her courage and constancy from the God of Israel, *under whose wings she was come to trust*, and now he became an instrument of that kindness, which was an answer to his prayer, and helped to make his own words good. Now she had the command of those servants with whom she had associated, and of those fields in which she had gleaned. Thus sometimes *God raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them with princes*, *Psal. cxiii. 7, 8.*

2. Ruth a mother. *The Lord gave her conception, for the fruit of the womb is his reward*, *Psal. cxxvii.* 3. It is one of the keys he hath in his hand; and he sometimes makes the barren woman that had been long so, to be a joyful mother of children, *Psal. cxiii. 9.* *Isa. liv. 1.*

3. Ruth still a daughter-in-law, and the same that she always was to Naomi, who was so far from being forgotten, that she was a principal sharer in these new joys. The good women that were at the labour when this child was born, congratulated Naomi upon it, more than either Boaz or Ruth, because she was the match-maker; and it was the family of her husband that was hereby built up. See here, as before, what an air of devotion there was then, even upon the common expressions of civility among the Israelites? Prayer to God attended the marriage, *ver. 11.* and praise to him the birth of the child. What pity it is that such pious language should either be disused among Christians, or degenerate into a formality. *Blessed be the Lord* that has sent thee this grandson, *ver. 14, 15.* (1.) Who was the preserver of the name of her family, and who, they hoped, would be famous, because his father was so. (2.) Who would be hereafter dutiful and kind to her, so they hoped, because his mother was so. If he would

would but take after her, he would be a comfort to his old grandmother, a restorer of her life, and if there should be occasion, would have wherewithal to be the nourisher of her old age. It is a great comfort to those that are going into years, to see of those that descend from them, growing up, that are likely, by the blessing of God, to be a stay and support to them, when the years come wherein they will need such, and of which they will say, they have no pleasure in them. Observe, they say of Ruth, that she loved Naomi, and therefore was better to her than seven sons. See how God in his providence sometimes makes up the want and loss of those relations from whom we expected most comfort, in those from whom we expected least. The bonds of love prove stronger than those of nature; as there is a *friend that sticks closer than a brother*, so here there was a daughter-in-law, better than an own child. See what wisdom and grace will do.

Now here, (1.) The child is named by the neighbours, *ver.* 17. The good women would have it called, Obed, a *servant*, either in remembrance of the meanness and poverty of the mother, or in prospect of his being hereafter a servant, and very serviceable to his grandmother. It is no dishonour to those that are never so well born, to be servants to God, their friends, and their generation. The motto of the princes of Wales, is *ich dien*, I serve. (2.) The child is nursed by the grandmother, *i. e.* dry-nursed, when the mother had weaned him from the breast, *ver.* 16. She laid it in her bosom, in token of her tender affection to it, and care of it. Grandmothers are often most fond.

4. Ruth hereby brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ, which was the greatest honour. The genealogy is here drawn from Pharez, through Boaz and Obed, to David, and so leads towards the Messiah, and therefore not an endless genealogy.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

Of the First BOOK of

S A M U E L.

This book, and that which follows it, bears the name of Samuel in the title, not because he was the penman of them, except of so much of them as fell within his own time, to the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book, in which we have an account of his death. But because the first book begins with a large account of him, his birth and childhood, his life and government; and the rest of these two volumes that are denominated from him contains the history of the reigns of Saul and David, who were both anointed by him. And because the history of these two kings takes up the greatest part of these books, the Vulgar Latin call them the first and second Books of the Kings; and the two that follow, the third and fourth, which the titles in our English Bibles take notice of with an alias; otherwise called the first Book of the Kings. The LXX call them the first and second Book of the Kingdoms: It is needless to contend about it, but there is no occasion to vary from the Hebrew verity. These two books contain the history of two last of the judges, Eli and Samuel, who were not, as the rest, men of war, but clergymen; and so much of them is an appendix to the book of Judges; and of the two first of the kings, Saul and David; and that part of them is an entrance upon the history of the kings. They contain a considerable part of the sacred history, are sometimes referred to in the New Testament, and often in the titles of David's Psalms, which if placed in their order would fall in, in these books. It is uncertain who was the penman of them; it is probable, Samuel wrote the history of his own time, and that after him some of the prophets that were with David, Nathan, as likely as any, continued it. This first book gives us a full account of Eli's fall and Samuel's rise and good government; chap. i.—viii. Of Samuel's resignation of the government, and Saul's advancement and male-administration, chap. ix.—xv. The choice of David, his struggles with Saul, Saul's ruin at last, and the opening of the way for David to the throne, chap. xvi.—xxxi. And these things are written for our learning.

C H A P. I.

The history of Samuel here begins as early as that of Samson did, even before he was born, as afterwards the history of John Baptist and our blessed Saviour. Some of the scripture worthies drop out of the clouds as it were, and their first appearance is in their full growth and lustre. But others are accounted for from the birth; and from the womb, and from the conception. It is true of all, what God saith of the prophet Jeremiah, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, Jer. i. 5. But some great men were brought into the world with more observation than others; and were more early distinguished from common persons, as Samuel for one.

God in this matter acts as a free agent. The story of Samson introduceth him as a child of promise, Judg. xiii. But the story of Samuel introduceth him as a child of prayer. Samson's birth was foretold by an angel to his mother; Samuel was asked of God by his mother; both together intimate what wonders are produced by the word and prayer. Samuel's mother was Hannah, the principal person concerned in the story of this chapter. (1.) Here is her affliction, she was childless, and this affliction aggravated by her rival's insolence, but in some measure balanced by her husband's kindness, ver. 1—8. (2.) The prayer and vow she made to God under this affliction, in which Eli the high-priest at first censured her, but afterwards encouraged her, ver. 9—18. (3.) The birth and nursing of Samuel, ver. 19—23. (4.) The presenting of him to the Lord, ver. 24—28.

1. **N**OW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2. And he had two wives, the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3. And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. 4. ¶ And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. 5. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had shut up her womb; 6. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

We have here an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father's name was Elkanah, a Levite, and of the family of the Kohathites, (the most honourable house of that tribe) as appears, 1 Chron. vi. 33, 34. His ancestor Zuph was an Ephrathite, i. e. of Bethlehem-Judah, which was called Ephrathah, Ruth i. 2. there this family of the Levites was first seated, but one branch of it, in process of time, removed to mount Ephraim, from which Elkanah descended: Micah's Levite came from Bethlehem to mount Ephraim, Judg. xvii. 7. Ministers families are as moveable as any. Perhaps notice is taken of their being originally Ephrathites, to shew their alliance to David. This Elkanah lived at Ramah, or Ramathaim, which signifies the double Ramah, the higher and lower town, the same with Arimathea of which Joseph was, here called Ramathaim-zophim: Zophim signifies *watchmen*; probably, they had one of the schools of the prophets there, for prophets are called *watchmen*: the Chaldee paraphrase calls Elkanah a disciple of the prophets. But it seems to me, that it was in Samuel that prophecy revived, before his time there being for a great while no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. Nor is there any mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel, except Judg. vi. 8. So that we have no reason to think, that there was any nursery or college of prophets here, till Samuel himself founded one, 1 Sam. xix. 19, 20. This is the account of Samuel's parentage, and the place of his nativity.

Let us now take notice of the state of the family.

1. It was a devout family. All the families of Israel should be so, but Levites families in a particular manner. Ministers should be patterns of family-religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn feasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, to *worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts*. I think, this is the first time in scripture, that God is called *the Lord of hosts*, *Jehovah Sabaoth*, a name by which he was afterwards very much called and known. Probably, Samuel the prophet was the first that used this title of God, for the comfort of Israel, when in his time their hosts were few and feeble, and those of their enemies many and mighty; then it would be a support to them, to think that the God they served is Lord of hosts, of all the hosts both of heaven and earth: of them he had a sovereign command, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. Elkanah was a country Levite, and, for ought appears, had not any place or office which required his attendance at the tabernacle, but he went up, as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours, and set them a good example. When he sacrificed he worshipped, joining prayers and thanksgivings with his sacrifices. In this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly.

And that which made it the more commendable in him, was (1.) That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nation; some among them worshipped other gods, and the most remiss in the service of the God of Israel, and yet Elkanah kept his integrity whatever others did, his resolution was, that he and his house should serve the Lord. (2.) That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men, that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that carried themselves very ill in their place, as we shall find afterwards, yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. God had then tied his people to one place, and one altar, and forbidden them, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship elsewhere, and therefore in pure obedience to that command he attended at Shiloh; if the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we under the gospel are not tied to any one place, or family; but the pastors and teachers which the exalted Redeemer has given

his church, are those only whose ministration tends to the *perfecting of the saints*, and the *edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 11, 12. None have dominion over our faith; but our obligation is to those that are the helpers of our holiness and joy, not to any that by their scandalous immoralities, like Hophni and Phinehas, make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; tho' still the validity and efficacy of the sacraments, depends not on the purity of him that administers them.

2. Yet it was a divided family, and the divisions of it carried with them both guilt and grief. Where there is piety, it is pity but there should be unity. The joint devotions of a family should put an end to divisions in it.

1. The original cause of this division was Elkanah's marrying two wives, which was a transgression of the original institution of marriage, to which our Saviour reduceth it, Mat. xix. 5. *From the beginning it was not so*. It made mischief in Abraham's family, and Jacob's, and here in Elkanah's: how much better doth the law of God provide for our comfort and ease in this world than we would, if we were left to our selves. It is probable, Elkanah married Hannah first, and because he had not children by her so soon as he hoped, he married Peninnah, who bare him children indeed, but was in other things a vexation to him. Thus are men often beaten with rods of their own making.

2. That which followed upon this error was, that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings; Peninnah like Leah was fruitful and had many children, which should have made her easy and thankful, tho' she was but a second wife, and was less beloved; Hannah like Rachel was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a *worthy portion he gave her*, ver. 5. and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different tempers; Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented: and Elkanah had a hard game to play between them.

1. Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

2. He did all he could to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her affliction, ver. 4, 5. At the feasts he offered peace-offerings, to supplicate for peace in his family, and when he and his family were to eat their share of the sacrifice, in token of their communion with God, and his altar, tho' he carved to Peninnah and her children competent portions, yet to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, the choicest piece that came to the table, the piece (whatever it was) that used to be given on such occasions to those that were most valued; this he did in token of his love to her, and to give all possible assurances of it. Observe, 1. Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren. *Christ loves his church*, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness; and *so ought men to love their wives*, Eph. v. 25. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is not their sin but their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted. (2.) He studied to shew his love so much the more, because she was afflicted, insulted, and her spirits were low. It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down. (3.) He shewed his great love to her, by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings. Thus we should testify our affections to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them, the more room let us give them in our prayers.

3. Peninnah was extremely peevish and provoking. (1.) She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despised her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language, as one whom heaven did not favour. (2.) She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her the more was she exasperated against her; which was all over base and barbarous. (3.) She did this most when they *went up to the house of the Lord*, perhaps, because then they were more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah shewed his affection most to Hannah. But it was very ill at such a time to shew her malice, when pure hands were to be lifted up at God's altar *without wrath and quarrelling*. It was likewise very unkind at that time to vex Hannah, not only because then they were in company, and others would take notice of it, but then Hannah was to mind her devotions, and desired to be most calm and composed, and free from disturbance. The great adversary to our purity and peace is then most industrious to ruffle us, when we should be most composed. When the *sons of God* come to *present themselves before the Lord*, Satan will be sure to come among them, Job i. 6. (4.) She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was her constant practice; neither deference to her husband, nor compassion to Hannah, could break her of it; and lastly, That which she designed was to make her fret; perhaps in hopes to break her heart,

heart, that she might possess her husband's heart solely. Or because she took a pleasure in her uneasiness; nor could Hannah gratify her more than by fretting. Note, It is an evidence of a base and ill disposition, to delight in grieving those that are melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humour that are apt to fret, and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another's burthens, not add to them.

4. Hannah (poor woman) could not bear the provocation, *she wept, and did not eat*, ver. 7. It made her uneasy to her self, and all her relations. She did not eat of the feast, her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company, and a jar in the harmony of family joy. It was of the *feast upon the sacrifice* that she *did not eat*, for they were not to *eat of the holy things in their mourning*, Deut. xxvi. 14. Lev. x. 19. Yet it was her infirmity so far to give way to the sorrow of the world; as to disfit her self for holy joy in God. Those that are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves very much of the comforts both of life and godliness. We find that God took notice of this ill effect of discontents and disagreements in the conjugal relation, that the parties aggrieved *covered the altar of the Lord with tears, insomuch that he regarded not the offering*, Mal. ii. 13.

5. Elkanah said what he could to her to comfort her. She did not upbraid him with his unkindness in marrying another wife as Sarah did, nor did she render to Peninah railing for railing, but took the trouble wholly to herself, which made her fit to be much pitied. Elkanah shewed himself extremely grieved at her grief, ver. 8. *Hannah, why weepest thou?* 1. He is much concerned to see her thus overwhelmed with sorrow. They that by marriage are made one flesh, ought thus far to be of one spirit too, to share in each other's troubles, so that one cannot be easy while the other is uneasy. 2. He gives her a loving reproof for it. *Why weepest thou? And why is thy heart grieved?* As many as God loves he rebukes, and so should we. He puts her upon enquiring into the cause of her grief, tho' she had just reason to be troubled, yet let her consider whether she had reason to be troubled to such a degree? Especially so much as to be taken off by it from eating of the holy things. Note, Our sorrow upon any account is then sinful and inordinate, when it diverts us from our duty to God, and embitters our comfort in him. When it makes us unthankful for the mercies we enjoy, distrustful of the goodness of God to us in further mercies, when it casts a damp upon our joy in Christ, and hinders us from doing the duty, and taking the comfort of our particular relations. 3. He intimates that nothing should be wanting on his part to balance her grief. *Am not I better to thee than ten sons?* Thou knowest thou hast my affection entire, and let that comfort thee. Note, We ought to take notice of our comforts to keep us from over-grieving for our crosses, for our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have forfeited. If we would keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us, as well as that which is against us, else we are unjust to providence, and unkind to ourselves. *God hath set the one over against the other*, (Eccl. vii. 14.) and so should we.

9. ¶ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk: (now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord) 10. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept fore. 11. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine hand-maid, and remember me, and not forget thine hand-maid, but wilt give unto thine hand-maid a man-child, then I will give him unto the LORD, all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Elkanah had gently reproved Hannah for her inordinate grief, and here we find the good effect of the reproof.

1. It brought her to her meat. She eat and drank, ver. 9,

She did not harden herself in sorrow, nor grow sullen when she was reprov'd for it, but when she perceived her husband uneasy that she did not come eat with them, she cheered up her own spirits as well as she could and came to table. It is as great a piece of self-denial to control our passions, as it is to control our appetites.

2. It brought her to her prayers. It put her upon considering, do I well to be angry? Do I well to fret? What good doth it do me? Instead of binding the burthen thus upon my own shoulders, had I not better ease myself of it, and cast it upon the Lord by prayer? Elkanah had said, *Am not I better to thee than ten sons?* Which perhaps occasioned her to think within herself, whether he be so or no, God is, and therefore to him will I apply myself, and before him will I pour out my complaint, and try what relief that will give me. If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, and which was the *house of prayer*. They had newly offered their peace-offerings, to obtain the favour of God, and all good, and in token of their communion with him, and taking the comfort of their being accepted of him, they had feasted upon the sacrifice, and now it was proper to put up her prayer in the virtue of that sacrifice; for the peace-offerings typified Christ's mediation as well as the sin-offerings, for by it not only atonement is made for sin, but the audience and acceptance of our prayers, and an answer of peace to them is obtained for us: to that sacrifice in all our supplications we must have an eye.

Now concerning Hannah's prayer we may observe,

1. The warm and lively devotion there was in it; which appeared in several instances, for our direction in prayer.

(1.) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit, for the exciting and quickning of her pious affections in prayers. *Being in bitterness of soul she prayed*, ver. 10. This good use we should make of our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our blessed Saviour himself *being in an agony prayed more earnestly*, Luke xxii. 44.

(2.) She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer, she wept fore, like a true Israelite, she *wept and made supplication*, Hof. xii. 4. With an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul; the prayer came from her heart, as the tears from her eyes.

(3.) She was very particular, and yet very modest in her petition. She begged a child, a man-child, that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle. God gives us leave in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to instance in that special good thing we most need and desire. Yet she saith not as Rachel, *Give me children*, Gen. xxx. 1. She will be very thankful for one.

(4.) She made a solemn vow or promise that if God would give her son, she would *give it up to God*, ver. 11. He would be by birth a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God, but he should be by her vow a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred: It is probable she had acquainted Elkanah with her purpose before, and had had his consent and approbation. Note, 1. Parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, as living sacrifices and spiritual priests; and an obligation is thereby laid upon them to serve God faithfully, *all the days of their life*. 2. It is very proper when we are in pursuit of any mercy, to bind our own souls with a bond, that if God give it us, we will devote it to his honour, and cheerfully use it in his service. Not that hereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it, and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy, let us promise duty.

(5.) She spoke all this so softly that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but *her voice was not heard*, ver. 13. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart, and the desires of that. Thoughts are words to him, nor is he one of those gods that must be *cried aloud to*, 1 Kings xviii. 27. It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shame-facedness in her approach to God, she was none of those that *made her voice to be heard on high*, Isa. lviii. 4. It was a secret prayer, and therefore tho' made in a publick place yet was thus made secretly, and not as the Pharisees prayed *to be seen of men*. It is true, prayer is not a thing we have reason to be ashamed of, but we must avoid all appearances of ostentation. Let what passeth between God and our souls be kept to ourselves.

2. The hard censure she fell under for it. Eli was now high-priest, and judge in Israel, he sat upon a seat in the temple, to oversee what was done there, ver. 9. The tabernacle is here called the temple, because it was now fixed, and served all the purposes of a temple. There Eli sate to receive addresses and give direction, and somewhere, it is likely in a private corner, he espied Hannah at her prayers, and by her unusual carriage fancied she was in drink, and spoke to her accordingly, ver. 14. *How long wilt thou be drunken?* The very imputation that Peter and the apostles fell under, when the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, Acts ii. 13. Perhaps in this degenerate age, it was no strange thing to see drunken women at the door of the tabernacle; for otherwise one would think the vile lust of Hophni and Phinehas, could not have found so easy a prey there, chap. ii. 22. Eli took Hannah

Hannah for one of these. It is one ill effect of the abounding of iniquity, and it is becoming fashionable, that it often gives occasion to suspect the innocent. When a disease is epidemical, every one is suspected to be tainted with it.

Now, (1.) This was Eli's fault; and a great fault it was to pass so severe a censure without better observation or information. If his own eyes were already waxen dim, he should have employed those about him to enquire. Drunkards use to be noisy and turbulent, but this poor woman was silent and composed. His fault was the worse, that he was the priest of the Lord, who should have had *compassion on the ignorant*, Heb. v. 2. Note, It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in our censures of others, and to be forward to believe people guilty of ill things, while either the matter of fact on which the censure is grounded is doubtful, and unproved, or it is capable of a good construction. Charity commands us to hope the best concerning all, and forbids censoriousness. Paul had a very good information, when he did but *partly believe*, 1 Cor. xi. 18. hoping it was not so. Especially we ought to be cautious, how we censure the devotions of others, lest we call that hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or superstition, which is really the fruit of an honest zeal, and is accepted of God.

(2.) It was Hannah's affliction; and a great affliction it was, added to all the rest; vinegar to the wounds of her spirit. She had been reproved by Elkanah, because she would not eat and drink, and now to be reproached by Eli, as if she had eaten and drunk too much, was very hard. Note, It is no new thing for those that do well to be ill thought of, and we must not think strange if at any time it be our lot.

3. Hannah's humble vindication of herself from this crime with which she was charged. She bore it admirably well; did not retort the charge, and upbraided him with the debauchery of his own sons, did not bid him look at home and restrain them: Did not tell him, how ill it became one in his place, thus to abuse a poor sorrowful worshipper at the throne of grace. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not re-criminate, and return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to vindicate herself, and so must we, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) In justice to herself she expressly denies the charge; speaks to him with all possible respect, calls him *my lord*; intimates how very desirous she was to stand right in his opinion, and how loth to lie under his censure. No, my lord, it is not as you suspect, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, not any at all, (tho' it was proper enough to be given to one of such a *heavy heart*, Prov. xxxi. 6.) much less any to excess: Therefore *count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial*; Note, Drunkards are children of Belial; women drunkards particularly: Children of the wicked one: Children of disobedience: Children that will not endure the yoke, else they would not be drunk, and much more they are so when they are drunk. They that cannot govern themselves, will not bear that any one else should. Hannah owns, the crime had been very great, if she had indeed been guilty of it, and he might justly have shut her out of the courts of God's house; but the very manner of her speaking in her own defence, was sufficient to demonstrate that she was not drunk. (2.) In justice to him, she gives an account of her present carriage, which had given occasion to his suspicion. *I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit*, dejected and discomposed, and that is the reason I do not look as other people, the eyes not red with wine but weeping: And at this time I have not been talking to myself, as drunkards and fools do, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord, who hears and understands the language of the heart, and this out of the abundance of my complaint and grief. She had been more than ordinary fervent in prayer to God, and that she tells him was the true reason of the transport and disorder she seemed to be in. Note, When we are unjustly censured, we should endeavour not only to clear ourselves, but to satisfy our brethren, by giving them a just and true account of that which they misapprehended.

4. The atonement Eli made for his rash unfriendly censure, by a kind and fatherly benediction, *ver. 17.* He did not (as many are apt to do in such a case) take it for an affront to have his mistake rectified, and to be convinced of his error, nor did it put him out of humour. But, on the contrary, he now encouraged Hannah's devotions, as much as before he had discountenanced them; not only intimating that he was satisfied of her innocence by those words, *Go in peace*, but, being high-priest, as one having authority, he blessed her in the name of the Lord, and tho' he knew not what the particular blessing was she had been praying for, yet he puts his *Amen* to it, so good an opinion had he now conceived of her prudence and piety. *The God of Israel grant thee thy petition*, whatever it is, *that thou hast asked of him.* Note, By our meek and humble carriage towards those that reproach us, because they do not know us, we may perhaps make them our friends, and turn their censures of us into prayers for us.

5. The great satisfaction of mind with which Hannah now went away, *ver. 18.* She begged the continuance of Eli's good opinion of her, and his good prayers for her, and then she went her way, and did eat of what remained of the peace-offerings, none of which was to be left until the morning, and her countenance was no more sad: No more as it had been, giving marks of inward trouble and discomposure; but she looked pleasant and cheer-

ful, and all was well. Why what was the matter? Whence came this sudden happy change? She had by prayer committed her case to God, and left it with him, and now she was no more perplexed about it. She had prayed for herself, and Eli had prayed for her, and she believed God would either give her the mercy she had prayed for, or make up the want of it to her some other way. Note, Prayer is hearts ease to a gracious soul; the seed of Jacob have often found it so, being confident that God will never say unto them, *Seek ye me in vain*, see *Phil. iv. 6, 7.* Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so.

19. ¶ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD. 21. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22. But Hannah went not up, for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.* 23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good, tarry until thou have weaned him, only the LORD establish his word: so the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24. ¶ And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young. 25. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. 26. And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. 27. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28. Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

Here is, 1. The return of Elkanah and his family to their own habitation, when the days appointed for the feast were over, *ver. 19.* Observe how they improved their time at the tabernacle: every day they were there, even that which was fixed for their journey home, they worshipped God. And they rose up early to do it. It is good to begin the day with God. Let him that is the first have the first. They had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, and yet they would not stir till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. They had spent several days now in religious worship, and yet they attended once more: We should not be weary of well-doing.

2. The birth and name of this desired son. At length the Lord remembered Hannah, the very thing she desired, *ver. 11.* and more she needed not desire, that was enough, for then she conceived and bare a son. Tho' God seem long to forget his peoples burthens, troubles, cares, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called Samuel, *ver. 20.* some make the etymology of it to be much the same with that of Ishmael, *heard of God*, because the mothers prayers were remarkably heard, and he was an answer to them. Others, because of the reason she gives for the name, make it to signify *asked of God*; it comes much to one; she designed by it to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favour to her in answering her prayers. Thus she designed upon every mention of his name to take the comfort to her self and to give God the glory of that gracious condescension. Note, Mercies in answer to prayer are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, as *Psal. cxvi. 1, 2.* How many seasonable deliverances and supplies may we call Samuels *asked of God*; and whatever is so, we are in a special manner engaged to devote to him. Hannah intended by this name to put her son in mind of the obligation he was under to be the Lord's, in consideration of this that he was asked of God, and was at the same time dedicated to him. A child of prayer is in a special manner bound to be a good child. Lemuel's mother minds him that he was the son of her vows, *Prov. xxxi. 2.*

3. The close attendance Hannah gave to the nursing of him, not only because he was dear to her, but because he was devoted to God, and for him she nursed him. She therefore nursed him herself, and did not hang him on another's breast. We ought to take care of our children not only with an eye to the law of nature as they are ours, but with an eye to the covenant of grace as they are given up to God. See *Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.* This sanctifies the nursing of them, when it is done as unto the Lord. Elkanah

Elkanah went up every year to worship at the tabernacle, and particularly to perform his vow; perhaps some vow he had made distinct from Hannah's, if God would give him a son by her, *ver.* 21. But Hannah, though she had a dear love for the courts of God's house, begged leave of her husband to stay at home, for the women were not under any obligation to go up to the three yearly feasts, as the men were. However, Hannah had used to go, but now desired to be excused, (1.) Because she would not be so long absent from her nursery. *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* We may suppose she kept constant at home, for if she had gone any whither, she would have gone to Shiloh. Note, God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those that are detained from publick ordinances by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that with an eye to God, he will graciously accept them therein; and though they tarry at home they shall divide the spoil. (2.) Because she would not go up to Shiloh till her son was big enough, not only to be taken thither, but to be left there; for if once she took him thither, she thought she could never find in her heart to bring him back again. Note, Those who are stedfastly resolved to pay their vows, may see good cause to defer the payment of them: *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* No animal was accepted in sacrifice, till it had been for some time under the dam, *Lev.* xxii. 27. Fruit is best when its ripe. Elkanah agrees to what she proposeth, *ver.* 23. *Do what seemeth thee good.* So far was he from delighting to cross her, that he referred it entirely to her. *Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is,* when yoke-fellows thus draw even in the yoke, and accommodate themselves to one another; each thinking well of what the other doth, especially in works of piety and charity. He adds a prayer, *Only the Lord establish his word,* i. e. God preserve the child through the perils of his infancy, that the solemn vow which God signified his acceptance of, by giving us the child, may be performed in its season, and so the whole matter may be accomplished. Note, Those that have in sincerity devoted their children to God, may with comfort pray for them, that God will establish the word sealed to them, at the same time that they were sealed for him.

4. The solemn entring of this child into the service of the sanctuary. We may take it for granted he was presented to the Lord at forty days old, as all the first-born were, *Luke* ii. 22, 23. but that is not mentioned, because there was nothing in it singular; but now he was weaned, he was presented, not to be redeemed. Some think it was as soon as he was weaned from the breast, which the Jews say was not till he was three years old; it is said she gave him suck till she had weaned him, *ver.* 23. Others think it was not till he was weaned from childish things, at eight or ten years old. But I see no inconvenience in admitting such an extraordinary child as this into the tabernacle at three years old, to be educated among the children of the priests. It is said, *ver.* 24. *the child was young,* but being intelligent above his years was no trouble. None can begin too soon to be religious. *The child was a child,* so the Hebrew reads it, in his learning age: *For whom shall he teach knowledge, but them that are newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?* *Isa.* xxviii. 29.

Observe how she presented her child.

1. With a sacrifice; no less than three bullocks, with a meat-offering for each, *ver.* 24. A bullock perhaps for each year of the child's life. Or, one for a burnt-offering, another for a sin-offering, and the third for a peace-offering. So far was she from thinking that by presenting her son to God she made God her debtor, that she thought it requisite by these slain offerings to seek God's acceptance of her living sacrifice. All our covenants with God for our selves, and ours, must be made by sacrifice, the great sacrifice.

2. With a grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness in answer to prayer. This she makes to Eli, because he had encouraged her to hope for an answer of peace, *ver.* 26, 27. *For this child I have prayed.* Here it was obtained by prayer, and here it is resigned to the prayer-hearing God. You have forgot me, my Lord, but I who now appear so pleasant, am the woman, the very same, that three years ago stood by thee here weeping and praying, and this was the child I prayed for. Answers of prayer may thus be humbly triumphed in, to the glory of God. Here is a living testimony for God, I am his witness that he is gracious. See *Psal.* lxxvi. 16—19. For this mercy, this comfort, I prayed, *and the Lord has given me my petition.* See *Psal.* xxxiv. 2, 4, 6. Hannah doth not mind Eli of it by the same token that he thought she was drunk; doth not say I am the woman that you pass that severe censure upon, what do you think of me now? Good men ought not to be upbraided with their infirmities and oversights; they have themselves repented of them, let them hear no more of them.

3. With a full surrender of all her interest in this child unto the Lord, *ver.* 28. *I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth.* And she repeats it, because she will never revoke it, *he shall be* (a deodand) *lent or given to the Lord.* Not that she designed to call for him back, as we do what we lend, but she useth this word *Shaal*, *he lent*, because it is the same word that she had used before, *ver.* 20. *I asked him of the Lord,* only in another conjugation. And, *ver.* 27. the Lord gave me the petition which *I asked*, *Shalti*, in *Kal*, therefore *I have lent him*, *Hilhilti*, the same word in *Hiphil*; and so it gives another etymology of his name Samuel, not only *asked of God*, but *lent to God*. And observe, (1.) Whatever we give

to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him, were first his gifts to us. *Of thine own, Lord, have we given thee*, *1 Chron.* xxix. 14, 16. (2.) Whatever we give to God, may upon this account be said to be lent to him; that though we may not recall it, as a thing lent, yet he will certainly repay it, with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, particularly what is given to his poor, *Prov.* xix. 17. When by baptism we dedicate our children to God, let us remember that they were his before, by a sovereign right, and that they are ours still so much the more to our comfort. Hannah resigns him to the Lord, not for a certain term of years, as children are set apprentices, but *durante vita*, *As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord*; a Nazarite for life. Such must our covenant with God be, a marriage covenant, as long as we live we must be his, and never forsake him.

Lastly, The child Samuel did his part beyond what could have been expected from one of his years; for him that seems to be spoken, *he worshipped the Lord there*, i. e. *he said his prayers*. He was, no doubt, extraordinary forward, and we have known children that have discovered some sense of religion very young; and his mother, designing him for the sanctuary, took particular care to train him up to that which was to be his work in the sanctuary. Note, Little children should learn betimes to worship God. Their parents should instruct them in it, and bring them to it, put them upon doing it as well as they can, and God will graciously accept them and teach them to do better.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *Hannah's song of thanksgiving to God, for his favour to her, in giving her Samuel*, *ver.* 1—10. (2.) *Their return to their family, with Eli's blessing*, *ver.* 11, 20. *the increase of their family*, *ver.* 21. *Samuel's growth and improvement*, *ver.* 11, 18, 21, 26. *and the care Hannah took to clothe him*, *ver.* 19. (3.) *The great wickedness of Eli's sons*, *ver.* 12—17, 22. (4.) *The over-mild reproof that Eli gave them for it*, *ver.* 23—25. (5.) *The justly dreadful message God sent him by a prophet, threatening the ruin of his family, for the wickedness of his sons*, *ver.* 27—36.

1. **A**ND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoice in thy salvation. 2. *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.* 3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength. 5. *They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.* 6. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. 10. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

We have here Hannah's thanksgiving, dictated not only by the spirit of prayer, but by the spirit of prophecy. Her petition for the mercy she desired, we had before, *chap.* i. 11. and here her return of praise: in both, *out of the abundance of a heart deeply affected*, in the former with her own wants, and in the latter with God's goodness, *her mouth spake*.

Observe in general, (1.) When she had received mercy from God, she owned it with thankfulness to his praise. Not like the nine lepers, *Luke* xvii. 17. Praise is our rent, our tribute, we are unjust if we do not pay it. (2.) The mercy she had received was an answer to prayer, and therefore she thought her self especially obliged to give thanks for it. What we win by prayer, we may wear with comfort, and must wear with praise. (3.) Her thanksgiving is here called a prayer: *Hannah prayed*: for thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God we must express a grateful regard to him as our benefactor. Nay, and thanksgiving for mercies received, shall be accepted as a petition for further mercy. (4.) From this particular mercy she had received from God, she takes occasion, with an elevated and enlarged heart, to

Speak glorious things of God, and of his government of the world, for the good of his church. Whatever at any time gives rise to our praises, in this manner they should be raised. (5.) Her prayer was mental, *her voice was not heard*; but in her thanksgiving she spake that all might hear her. She made her supplication *with groanings that could not be uttered*, but now her lips were opened to *shew forth God's praise*. (6.) This thanksgiving is here left upon record for the encouragement of those of the weaker sex to attend the throne of grace; God will regard their prayers and praises. The virgin Mary's song has great affinity with this of Hannah, *Luke i. 46*.

Three things we have in this thanksgiving.

1. Hannah's triumph in God, in his glorious perfections, and the great things he had done for her, *ver. 1, 2, 3*. Observe,

(1.) What great things she saith of God. She takes little notice of the particular mercy she was now rejoicing in, doth not commend Samuel for the prettiest child, the towardliest, the wittiest of his age, she ever saw, as fond parents are too apt to do; no, she overlooks the gift, and praiseth the giver; whereas most forget the giver, and fasten only on the gift. Every stream should lead us to the fountain; and the favours we receive from God, should raise our admiration of the infinite perfections there are in God. There may be other Samuels, but no other Jehovah. *There is none beside thee*. Note, God is to be praised as a peerless being, and of unparalleled perfection; this glory is due unto his name, to own not only that there is *none like him, but none beside him*. All others were pretenders, *Psal. xviii. 31*.

Four of God's glorious attributes Hannah here celebrates the glory of. (1.) *His unspotted purity*. This is that attribute which is most praised in the upper world, by those that always behold his face, *Isa. vi. 3*. *Rev. iv. 8*. When Israel triumphed over the Egyptians, God was praised *as glorious in holiness*, *Exod. xv. 11*. So here, in Hannah's triumph, *There is none holy as the Lord*. It is the rectitude of his nature, his infinite agreement with himself, and the equity of his government and judgment, in all the administrations of both. At the remembrance of this we ought to give thanks.

(2.) *His almighty power*. *Neither is there any rock* (or any strength, for so the word is sometimes rendred) *like our God*. Hannah had experienced a mighty support by staying herself upon him, and therefore speaks as she had found, and seems to refer to that of Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 31*. (3.) *His unsearchable wisdom*. The Lord, the judge of all, is a God of knowledge; he clearly and perfectly sees into the character of every person, and the merits of every cause; and he gives knowledge and understanding to those that seek it of him. (4.) *His unerring justice*; *by him actions are weighed*. His own are so, in his eternal counsels; the actions of the children of men are so, in the balances of his judgment; so that he will *render to every man according to his work*, and is not mistaken in what any man is or doth.

(2.) How she solaceth her self in these things. What we give God the glory of, we may take the comfort of: Hannah doth so.

(1.) In holy joy. *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*; not so much in her son, as in her God; he is to be *the gladness of our joy*, *Psal. xliii. 4*. and our joy must not terminate in any thing short of him. *I rejoice in thy salvation*; not only in this particular favour to me, but in the salvation of thy people Israel, those especially which this child will be an instrument of, and that above all, by Christ, which those are but the types of. (2.) In holy triumph. *My horn is exalted*; not only my reputation saved by my having a son, but greatly raised by having such a son. We read of some of the singers whom David appointed to lift up the horn, an instrument of musick, in praising God, *1 Chron. xxv. 5*. so that *my horn is exalted*, means this, my praises are very much elevated to an unusual strain. *Exalted in the Lord*; God is to have the honour of all our exaltations, and in him must we triumph. *My mouth is enlarged*; i. e. now I have wherewith to answer them that reproached me; he that has his quiver full of arrows, his house full of children, shall not be ashamed to *speake with the enemy in the gate*, *Psal. cxxvii. 5*.

(3.) How she herewith silenceth those that set up themselves as rivals with God, and rebels against him, *ver. 3*. *Talk no more so exceeding proudly*. Let not Peninnah and her children upbraid her any more with her confidence in God, and praying to him, at length she found it not in vain. See *Mic. vii. 10*. *Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said, where is thy God!* Or perhaps it was below her to take so much notice of Peninnah, and her malice, in this song; but this is intended as a check to the insolence of the Philistines, and other enemies of God and Israel, that *set their mouth against the heavens*, *Psal. lxxiii. 9*. let this put them to silence and shame; he that has thus judged for me against my adversary, will judge for his people against all theirs.

2. The notice she takes of the wisdom and sovereignty of the divine providence, in its disposals of the affairs of the children of men; such are the vicissitudes of them, and such the strange and sudden turns and revolutions of them, that it is often found a very short step between the height of prosperity and the depth of adversity: *God has not only set the one over against the other*, *Eccl. vii. 14*. but the one very near the other, and no gulf fixed between them, that we may *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not*.

(1.) The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleaseth, *ver. 4*. On the one hand, if he

speake the word, *the bows of the mighty men are broken*, they are disarm'd, disabled to do as they have done, and as they have design'd; they have gone by the worse in battle, that seemed upon all accounts to have had the advantage on their side, and thought themselves sure of victory. See *Psal. xlii. 9*. --- *xxxvii. 15, 17*. Particular persons are soon weakened by sickness and age, and they find that the bow doth not long abide in strength; many a mighty man that has gloried in his might hath found it a deceitful bow, that fail'd him when he trusted to it. On the other hand, if the Lord speak the word, they that stumbled through weakness, that were so feeble that they could not go straight, or steady, are *girt with strength*, in body and mind, and are able to bring great things to pass. They that were weakened by sickness return to their vigour, *Job xxxiii. 25*. by sorrow shall recover their comfort, which will *confirm the weak hands and the feeble knees*, *Isa. xxxv. 3*. Victory turns in favour of that side that was given up for gone, and even *the lame take the prey*, *Isa. xxxiii. 23*.

(2.) The rich are soon impoverished, and the poor strangely enriched of a sudden, *ver. 5*. Providence sometimes doth so blast mens estates and cross their endeavours, and with a fire not blown consume their increase, that they that were full, their barns full, and their bags full, their *houses full of good things*, *Job xxii. 18*. and their *bellies full of these hid treasures*, *Psal. xvii. 14*. have been reduced to such straits and extremities as to want the necessary supports of life, and to *hire out themselves for bread*, and they must dig, since to *beg they are ashamed*. *Riches flee away*, *Prov. xxiii. 5*. and leave those miserable that, when they had them, placed their happiness in them. To them that have been full and free, poverty and slavery must needs be doubly grievous. But, on the other hand, sometimes providence so orders it, that *they that were hungry ceased*, i. e. ceased to hire out themselves for bread as they had done, having, by God's blessing on their industry, got before-hand in the world, and enough to live upon at ease, *they shall hunger no more nor thirst any more*. This is not to be ascribed to fortune, nor merely to mens wisdom or folly, *Riches are not to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill*, *Eccl. ix. 11*. nor is it always mens own fault that they become poor, but *ver. 7*. *The Lord maketh some poor, and maketh others rich*, the impoverishing of one is the enriching of another, and it is God's doing: To some he gives power to get wealth, from others he takes away power to keep the wealth they have. Are we poor? *God made us poor*, which is a good reason why we should be content, and reconcile ourselves to our condition: Are we rich? *God made us rich*, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and serve him cheerfully in the abundance of good things he gives us. It may be understood of the same person; those that were rich God makes them poor, and after a while makes them rich again, as Job: he gave, he takes away, and then gives again. Let not the rich be proud and secure, for God can soon make them poor; let not the poor despond and despair, for God can in due time enrich them again.

(3.) Empty families are replenished, and numerous families diminished and made few. This is the instance that comes close to the occasion of the thanksgiving: *The barren hath born seven*, meaning herself, for though at present she had but one son, yet that one being a Nazarite, devoted to God, and employed in his immediate service, he was to her as good as seven. Or, it is the language of her faith, now she has one she hopes for more, and was not disappointed, she had five more, *ver. 21*. so that if we reckon Samuel but for two, as we may well, she has the number she promised herself, the *barren hath born seven*, while on the other hand, *she that hath many children is waxed feeble*; and hath left bearing; she saith no more, Peninnah is now mortified, and crest-fallen: The tradition of the Jews is, that still when Hannah bore one child Peninnah buried two. There are many instances both of the increase of families that were inconsiderable, and the extinguishing of families that made a figure, *Job xxii. 23*. *Psal. cvii. 38, &c*.

(4.) God is the sovereign Lord of life and death: *ver. 6*. *The Lord killeth and maketh alive*. Understand it (1.) Of God's sovereign dominion and universal agency, in the lives and deaths of the children of men. He presides in births and burials. Whenever any die, 'tis God that directs the arrows of death, *the Lord killeth*, Death is his messenger, strikes whom and when he bids, none are brought to the dust, but it is he that brings them down, for in his hand are the *keys of death and the grave*, *Rev. i. 18*. whenever any are born, 'tis he that *makes them alive*, *none knows what is the way of the spirit*, but this we know, that it comes from the *Father of spirits*. Whenever any are recovered from sickness, and delivered from imminent perils, it is God that bringeth up, *for to him belong the issues from death*. (2.) Of the distinction he makes between some and others, he *killeth* some, and *maketh*, that is, keepeth others *alive* that were in the same danger, in war, suppoise, or pestilence. Two in a bed together, it may be, one taken by death, and the other left alive, *even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes*. Some that were most likely to live brought down to the grave, and others that were as likely to die brought up; for living and dying do not go by likelihoods. God's providences towards some are killing, ruining to their comforts; and towards others at the same time reviving. (3.) Of the change he makes with one and the same person. *He killeth and bringeth down to the grave*, i. e. he brings even to death's door, and then revives and raiseth up, when even life was despair'd of,

of, and a sentence of death received, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. *turns to destruction*, and then faith, *return*, Psal. xc. 3. Nothing is too hard for God to do, no not the quickning of the dead, and putting life into dry bones.

(5.) Advancement and abasement are both from him: He bringeth some low, and *lifteth up* others, ver. 7. humbles the proud, and gives grace and honour to the lowly; lays those in the dust that that would vie with the God above them, and trample upon all about them, Job xl. 12, 13. but lifteth up those with his salvation that humbled themselves before him, Jam. iv. 10. Or, it may be understood of the same persons, those whom he had brought low, when they are sufficiently humbled he lifteth them up. This is enlarged upon, ver. 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust*, a low and mean condition, nay, from the dunghil, a base and servile condition, loath'd and despis'd, *to set them among princes*, See Psal. cxiii. 7. Promotion comes not by chance, but from the counsel of God, which often prefers those that were very unlikely, and that men thought very unworthy. Joseph and Daniel, Moses and David were thus strangely advanced, from a prison to a palace, from a sheep-hook to a scepter. The princes they are set among may be tempted to disdain them, but God can establish the honour which he gives thus surprisingly, and make them even to *inherit the throne of glory*. Let not those whom providence has thus prefer'd be upbraided with the dust and dunghil they are raised out of, for the meaner their beginnings were, the more are they favour'd, and God glorified in their advancement, if it be by lawful and honourable means.

Lastly, A reason is given for all these Dispensations, which obligeth us to acquiesce in them, how surprising soever they are, *for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's*. (1.) If we understand it literally, it speaks God's almighty power, which cannot be control'd. He upholds the whole creation, founded the earth, and still sustains it by the word of his power. What cannot he do in the affairs of families and kingdoms, far beyond our conception and expectation, *who hangs the earth upon nothing*, Job xxvi. 7. But (2.) If we understand it figuratively, it speaks his uncontested sovereignty, which cannot be disputed: The princes and great ones of the earth, the directors of states and governments are the *pillars of the earth*, Psal. lxxv. 3. On these hinges the affairs of the world seem to turn, but they are the *Lords*, Psal. xlvii. 9. From him they have their power, and therefore he may advance whom he pleases, and who may say, *What dost thou?*

3. Here's a prediction of the preservation and advancement of all God's faithful friends, and the destruction of all his and their enemies. Having testified her joyful triumph in what God had done, and is doing, she concludes with joyful hopes of what he would do, ver. 9, 10. Pious affections (faith bishop Patrick) in those days, rose up many times to the height of prophecy, whereby God continued in that nation his true religion, in the midst of their idolatrous inclinations. This prophecy may refer (1.) More immediately to the government of Israel by Samuel, and David whom he was employ'd to anoint. The Israelites, God's saints, should be protected and delivered; the Philistines, their enemies, should be conquered and subdued, and particularly by *thunder*, chap. vii. 10. Their dominions should be enlarg'd, king David strengthened and greatly exalted, and Israel that in the time of the judges had made so small a figure, and had much-a-do to subsist, should now shortly become great and considerable, and give law to all its neighbours: A mighty change that was, and the birth of Samuel was, as it were, the dawning of that day. But (2.) We have reason to think that this prophecy looks further to the kingdom of Christ, and the administration of that kingdom of Grace, of which she now comes to speak, having spoken so largely of the kingdom of Providence. And here is the first time that we meet with the name Messiah, or his Anointed. The ancient expositors, both Jewish and Christian, make it to look beyond David, to the son of David; glorious things are here spoken of the kingdom of the Mediator, both before and since his incarnation, for the method of the administration of it, both by the eternal Word, and by that Word made flesh, is much the same.

Concerning that kingdom we are here assured,

1. That all the loyal subjects of it shall be carefully and powerfully protected, ver. 9. *He will keep the feet of his saints*. There is a people in the world that are God's saints, his select and sanctified ones; and he will keep their feet, *i. e.* all that belongs to them shall be under his protection, till it comes to their very feet, the lowest part of the body. If he will keep their feet, much more their head and hearts: or, he will keep their feet, *i. e.* he will secure the ground they stand on, and establish their goings; he will set a guard of grace upon their affections and actions, that their feet may neither wander out of the way, or stumble in the way. When their feet are ready to slip, Psal. lxxiii. 2. *his mercy holdeth them up*, Psal. xciv. 18. and *keepeth them from falling*, Jude 24. while we keep God's ways he will keep our feet. See Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24.

2. That all the powers engag'd against it shall not be able to effect the ruin of it. By strength no man shall prevail. God's strength is engaged for the church, and while it is so, man's strength shall not prevail against it. The church seems destitute of strength, her friends few and feeble, but prevalency doth not go by human strength, Psal. xxxiii. 16. God neither needs it for him (Psal. cxlvii. 10.) nor dreads it against him,

3. That all the enemies of it will certainly be broken, and brought down. *The wicked shall be silent in darkness*, ver. 9. they shall be struck both blind and dumb, not be able to see their way, nor have any thing to say for themselves. Damned sinners are sentenced to utter darkness, and in it they will be for ever speechless, Matt. xxii. 12, 13. The wicked are called *The adversaries of the Lord*, and it is foretold, ver. 10. that they *shall be broken to pieces*. Their design against his kingdom among men will all be dash'd, and they themselves destroy'd; how can they speed better that are in arms against omnipotence! See Luke xix. 27. God has many ways of doing it, and, rather than fail, from *heaven shall he thunder upon them*, and so not only put them in terror and consternation, but bring them to destruction: Who can stand before God's thunderbolts?

4. That the conquests and commands of this kingdom shall extend themselves to distant regions; *The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth*. David's victories and dominions reach'd far, but the *utmost parts of the earth* are promised to the Messiah, for his *possession*, Psal. ii. 8. to be either reduc'd to his golden scepter, or ruin'd by his iron rod. God is judge of all, and he will judge for his people, against his and their enemies, Psal. cx. 5, 6.

5. That the power and honour of Messiah the prince shall grow and encrease more and more. *He shall give strength unto his king*, for the accomplishing of his great undertaking, (Psal. lxxxix. 21. and see Luk. xxii. 43.) strengthen him to go through the difficulties of his humiliation, and in his exaltation he will *lift up the head*, Psal. cx. 7. lift up the horn, the power and honour of his *anointed*, and *make him higher than the kings of the earth*, Psal. lxxxix. 27. This crowns the triumph, and is more than any thing the matter of her exaltation. Her *horn is exalted*, ver. 1. because she foresees the horn of the Messiah will be so. This secures the hope, the subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruin'd for the Anointed, the Lord Christ, is girt with strength, and is able to save and to destroy unto the uttermost.

11. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house; and the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. 12 ¶ Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not the LORD. 13. And the priests custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priests servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand: 14 And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself: so they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. 15. Also before they burnt the fat, the priests servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. 16. And if any man said unto him, Let him not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth: then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. 17. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. 18. ¶ But Samuel ministred before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. 19. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20. ¶ And Eli blessed Elkanah, and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. 21. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons, and two daughters: and the child Samuel grew before the LORD. 22. ¶ Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 23. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings, by all this people. 24. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the LORD's people to transgress. 25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. 26. (And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.)

In these verses we have the good character and posture of Elkanah's family, and the bad character and posture of Eli's family; the account of these two is observably interwoven throughout this whole paragraph; as if the Historian intended to set the one over against the other, that they might set off one another. The devotion and good order

order of Elkanah's family aggravated the iniquity of Eli's house; while the wickedness of Eli's sons made Samuel's early piety shine the more bright and illustrious.

First, Let us see how well things went in Elkanah's family, and how much better than formerly.

1. Eli dismissed them from the house of the Lord, when they had entered their little son there, with a blessing; *ver. 20.* He blessed as one having authority: *The Lord give thee more children of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord.* If Hannah had then had many children, it had not been such a generous piece of piety to part with one out of many, for the service of the tabernacle; but when she had but one, an only one whom she loved, her Isaac, to present him to the Lord, was such an act of heroic piety as should by no means lose its reward. As when Abraham had offered Isaac, he received the promise of a numerous issue, *Gen. xxii. 16, 17.* so did Hannah, when she had presented Samuel unto the Lord, a living sacrifice. Note, What is lent to the Lord will certainly be repayed with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, and oftentimes in kind. Hannah resigns one child to God, and is recompensed with five, for Eli's blessing took effect, *ver. 21. she bare three sons and two daughters.* There's nothing lost by lending to God, or losing for him, it shall be repaid a hundred-fold, *Matt. xix. 29.*

2. They returned to their own habitation, this is twice mention'd, *ver. 11.* and again *ver. 20.* 'twas very pleasant to attend at God's house, to bless him, and to be blessed of him. But they have a family at home that must be looked after, and thither they return, cheerfully leaving the dear little one behind them, knowing they left him in a good place, and it doth not appear that he cried after them, but was as willing to stay, as they were to leave him, so soon did he put away childish things, and carry it like a man.

3. They kept up their constant attendance at the house of God, with their yearly sacrifice, *ver. 19.* They did not think that their sons ministering there would excuse them, or that that offering must serve instead of other offerings, but having found the benefit of drawing near to God, they would omit no appointed season for it, and now they had one landmark more in Shiloh, to draw them thither: We may suppose they went thither to see their child oftner than once a Year, for it was not ten miles from Ramah, but their annual visit is taken notice of, because then they brought their yearly sacrifice; and then Hannah fitted up her son (and some think oftner than once a year) with a new suit of clothes, a little coat, *ver. 19.* and every thing belonging to it. She undertook to find him in clothes during his apprenticeship at the tabernacle, and took care he should be well provided, that he might appear more decent and slightly in his ministration, and to encourage him in his towardly beginnings. Parents must take care that their children want nothing that is fit for them, whether they are with them, or from them; but those that are dutiful and hopeful, and minister to the Lord, must be thought worthy of double care and kindness.

4. The child Samuel did very well: Four several times he is mentioned in these verses; and two things we are told of:

(1.) The service he did to the Lord. He did well indeed, for he ministered to the Lord, *ver. 11. 18.* according as his capacity was, he learnt his catechism, and was constant to his devotions; soon learnt to read, and took a pleasure in the book of the law, and thus he ministered to the Lord. He ministered before Eli, *i. e.* under his inspection, and as he ordered him, not before Eli's sons; all parties were agreed that they were unfit to be his tutors. Perhaps, he attended immediately on Eli's person, was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion, and that is call'd ministering to the Lord. Some little services perhaps he was employ'd in about the altar, tho' much under the age appointed by the law for the Levites ministration: He could light a candle, or hold a dish, or run of an errand, or shut a door; and because he did this with a pious disposition of mind, 'tis call'd, ministering to the Lord, and great notice is taken of it. After a while he did his work so well, that Eli appointed he should minister with a linen ephod as the priests did, tho' he was no priest, because he saw that God was with him. Note, Little children must learn betimes to minister to the Lord; Parents must train them up to it, and God will accept them. Particularly, let them learn to pay respect to their teachers, as Samuel to Eli. None can begin too soon to be religious. See *Psal. viii. 2.* and *Matt. xxi. 15. 16.*

(2.) The blessing he received from the Lord, *He grew before the Lord,* as a tender plant, *ver. 21. grew on,* *ver. 26.* in strength and stature, and especially in wisdom and understanding, and fitness for business. Note, Those young people that serve God as well as they can, he will give them to improve, that they may serve him better. They that are planted in God's house shall flourish, *Psal. xcii. 13. He was in favour with the Lord and with man.* Note, It is a great encouragement to children to be tractable, and virtuous, and good betimes, that if they be, both God and man will love them. Such children are the darlings both of heaven and earth. What is here said of Samuel, is said of our blessed Saviour, that great example, *Luke ii. 52.*

Secondly, Let us now see how ill things went in Eli's family, tho' seated at the very door of the tabernacle. The nearer the church, the farther from God.

1. The abominable wickedness of Eli's sons, *ver. 12. The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.* 'Tis emphatically express'd: Nothing so far to the contrary, but that Eli himself was a very good man,

and, no doubt, had educated his sons well, giving them good instructions, set them good examples, and put up many a good prayer for them, and yet, when they grew up, they prov'd sons of Belial, profane wicked men, and arrant rakes: *They knew not the Lord:* They could not but have a notional knowledge of God and his law, a form of knowledge, *Rom. ii. 20.* yet because their practice was not accordingly, they are spoken of as wholly ignorant of God; they liv'd as if they knew nothing at all of God. Note, Parents cannot give grace to their children, nor doth it run in a blood. Many that are sincerely pious themselves, live to see those that come from them notoriously impious and profane, *for the race is not to the swift.* Eli was high-priest and judge in Israel, his sons were priests by their birth, their character was sacred and honourable, and oblig'd them for their reputation sake, to observe a decorum; they were resident at the fountain-head both of magistracy and ministry, and yet they were sons of Belial, and their honour, power, and learning made them so much the worse. They did not go to serve other gods, as those did that liv'd at a distance from the altar; for from the house of God they had their wealth and dignity; but, which was worse, they manag'd the service of God as if he had been one of the dunghill deities of the heathen. 'Tis hard to say which dishonours God more, idolatry or profaneness, especially the profaneness of the priests.

Let us see the wickedness of Eli's sons; and it is a sad sight:

1. They profan'd the offerings of the Lord, and made a gain to themselves, or rather a gratification of their own luxury out of them. God had provided competently for them out of the sacrifices, *The offerings of the Lord made by fire,* were a considerable branch of their revenue, but that did not please them, they served not the God of Israel, but their own bellies, *Rom. xvi. 18.* such as the prophet calls greedy dogs that can never have enough, *Psal. lvi. 11.* (1.) They robbed the offerers, and seiz'd for themselves some of their part of the sacrifice of the peace-offerings. The priest had for his share the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder, *Lev. vii. 34.* but that did not content, when the flesh was a boiling for the offerer to feast upon religiously with his friends, they sent a servant with a flesh-hook of three teeth, a trident, and that must be struck into the pot, and whatever that brought up the priest must have, *ver. 13, 14.* and the people out of their great veneration suffer'd this to grow into a custom, so that after a while prescription was pleaded for this manifest wrong. (2.) They kept in before God himself, and encroach'd upon his right too, *as if it were a small thing to weary men, they weary'd my God also,* *Isai. vii. 13.* Be it observ'd to the honour of Israel, that tho' the people tamely yielded to their unwarrantable demands from them, yet they were very solicitous that God should not be robbed, *Let them not fail to burn the fat presently,* *ver. 16.* Let the altar have its due, for that is the main matter, unless God have the fat, they can feast with little comfort upon the flesh; it was a shame that the priests should need to be thus admonish'd by the people of their duty: But they regarded not the admonition, the priest will be served first, and will take what he thinks fit of the fat too, for he is weary of boil'd meat, he must have roast, and in order to that they must give it him raw; and if the offerer dispute it, tho' not in his own favour, let him take what he pleaseth of his part, but in favour of the altar, let them be sure to burn the fat, first; even the priest's servant was grown so very imperious, that he would either have it now, or take it by force: than which there could not be a greater affront to God, nor a greater abuse to the people. The effect was, (1.) That God was displeased, *The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord,* *ver. 17.* Nothing is more provoking to God than the profanation of sacred things, and mens serving their lusts with the offerings of the Lord. (2.) That religion suffer'd by it, *Men abhorred the offering of the Lord.* All good men abhorred their management of the offerings, and too many insensibly fell into a contempt of the offerings themselves for their sakes. It was the peoples sin to think the worse of God's institutions, but it was the much greater sin of the priests that gave them occasion to do so. Nothing brings a greater reproach upon religion, than ministers covetousness, sensuality, and imperiousness. In the midst of this sad story comes in the repeated mention of Samuel's devotion, *but Samuel ministered before the Lord,* as an instance of the power of God's grace in preserving him pure and pious, in the midst of this wicked crew; and that help'd to keep the sinking credit of the sanctuary in the minds of the people, who when they had said all they could against Eli's sons, could not but admire Samuel's seriousness, and speak well of religion for his sake.

2. They debauch'd the women that came to worship at the door of the tabernacle, *ver. 22.* they had wives of their own, but were like fed horses, *Jer. v. 8.* To have gone to the harlot's houses, the common prostitutes, had been abominable wickedness, but to use the interest which, as priests, they had in those women that had devout dispositions, and were religiously inclin'd, and to bring them to commit this wickedness, was such horrid impiety, as one can scarce think it possible men that call'd themselves priests should ever be guilty of. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth!* No words can sufficiently express the villainy of such practices as these.

3. The reproof which Eli gave his sons for this wickedness of theirs. *Eli was very old,* *ver. 22.* and could not himself inspect the service of the tabernacle as he had done, but left all to his sons, who, because of the infirmities of his age, slighted him, and did what they would;

would; however he was told of the wickedness of his sons, and we may well imagine what a heart-breaking it was to him, and how much it added to the burthens of his age; but it should seem he did not so much as reprove them, till he heard of their debauching the women, and then he thought fit to give them a check. Had he rebuked them for their greediness and luxury, this might have been prevented. Young people should be told of their faults, as soon as 'tis perceiv'd they begin to be extravagant, lest their hearts be hardened. Now concerning the reproof he gave them, observe 1. That it was very just and rational: That which he said was very well, (1.) He tells them that the matter of fact was too plain to be deny'd, and too publick to be conceal'd, *I hear of your evil dealings by all this people*, ver. 22. 'Tis not the surmise of one or two, but the avowed testimony of many, all your neighbours cry out shame on you, and bring their complaints to me, expecting that I should redress the grievance. (2.) He shews them the ill consequences of it, that they not only sinned, but made Israel to sin, and would have the peoples sin to answer for, as well as their own; you that should turn men from iniquity, *Mal. ii. 6. you make the Lord's people to transgress*, and corrupt the nation instead of reforming it; you tempt people to go serve other gods, when they see the God of Israel so ill serv'd. (3.) He warns them of the danger they brought themselves into by it, ver. 25. he intimates to them what God afterwards told him, that the iniquity would not be purged with sacrifice nor offering, chap. iii. 14. *If one man sin against another*, the judge, i. e. the priest, who was appointed to be the judge in many cases, *Deut. xvii. 9. shall judge him*, shall undertake his cause, arbitrate the matter, and make atonement for the offender, *but if a man sin against the Lord*, i. e. if a priest profane the holy things of the Lord, if a man that deals with God for others, do himself affront him, *who shall intreat for him?* Eli was himself a judge, and had oft made intercession for transgressors, but saith he, you that *sin against the Lord*, i. e. against the law and honour of God, in those very things which immediately pertain to him, and by which reconciliation is to be made, how can I intreat for you? Their condition was deplorable indeed, when their own father could not speak a good word for them, nor could have the face to appear as their advocate. Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself are most dangerous; *treading under foot the blood of the covenant*, for then there remains no more sacrifice, Heb. x. 26.

But (2.) It was too mild and gentle. He should have rebuk'd them sharply, their crimes deserv'd it, their temper needed it, the softness of his dealing with them would but harden them the more. The animadversion was too easy when he said, *It is no good report*: He should have said, it is a shameful scandalous thing, and not to be suffer'd! Whether it was because he loved them, or because he feared them, that he dealt thus tenderly with them, it was certainly an evidence of the want of zeal for the honour of God and his sanctuary. He bound them over to God's judgment, but he should have taken cognizance of their crimes himself, as high-priest and judge, and have restrained and punished them. What he said was well, but it was not enough. Note, It is sometimes necessary that we put an edge upon the reproofs we give. There are those that must be *saved with fear*, Jude 23.

3. Their obstinacy against this reproof; his lenity did not at all work upon them, they *hearkened not to their father*, tho' he was also a judge, they had no regard either to his authority, or to his affection, which was to them *an evident token of perdition*, 'twas *because the Lord would slay them*. They had long hardened their hearts, and now God in a way of righteous judgment hardened their hearts, and sealed their consciences, and withheld from them the grace they had resisted and forfeited. Note, Those that are deaf to the reproofs of wisdom are manifestly marked for ruin. The Lord has *determined to destroy them*, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. See Prov. xxix. 1. Immediately upon this Samuel's tractableness is again mentioned, ver. 26. to shame their obstinacy; *the child Samuel grew*. God's grace is his own: He denied it to the sons of the high priest, and gave it to the child of an obscure country Levite.

27. ¶ And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaohs house? 28. And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? 29. Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make your selves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? 30. Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31. Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy fathers house, that there shall not be

an old man in thine house. 32. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. 34. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day shall they die both of them. 35. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart, and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever. 36. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house, shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me (I pray thee) into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

Eli reprov'd his sons too gently, and did not threaten them as he should, and therefore God sent a prophet to him to reprove him sharply, and to threaten him, because by his indulgence of them, he had strengthened their hands in their wickedness. If good men be wanting in their duty, and by their carelessness and remissness contribute any thing to the sin of sinners, they must expect both to hear of it, and to smart for it. Eli's family was now nearer to God than all the families of the earth, and therefore he will punish them, Amos iii. 2. The message is sent to Eli himself, because God would bring him to repentance and save him; not to his sons whom he had determined to destroy. And it might have been a means of awakening him to do his duty at last, and so to have prevented the judgment, but we do not find it had any great effect upon him.

The message this prophet delivers from God is very close.

1. He minds him of the great things God has done for the house of his fathers, and for his family. He appeared to Aaron in Egypt, *Exod. iv. 27.* in the house of bondage, as a token of further favour he designed him, ver. 27. advanc'd him to the priesthood, entailed it upon his family, and thereby dignified it above any of the families of Israel; he entrusted him with honourable work, to offer on God's altar, *to burn incense*, and to wear that ephod in which was the breastplate of judgment; he settled upon him an honourable maintenance; a share out of *all the offerings made by fire*, ver. 28. what could he have done more for them, to engage them to be faithful to him? Note, The distinguishing favours we have received from God, especially those of the spiritual priesthood, are great aggravations of sin, and will be remembered against us in the day of account, if we profane our crown, and betray our trusts, *Deut. xxxii. 6. 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8.*

2. He exhibits a high charge against him and his family; his children did wickedly, and he conniv'd at it, and thereby involv'd himself in the guilt; the indictment therefore runs against them all, ver. 29. (1.) His sons had impiously profan'd the holy things of God: *Ye kick at my sacrifice which I have commanded*; not only trample upon the institution, as a mean thing, but spurn at it as a thing you hate to be tied up to. They did the utmost despite imaginable to the offerings of the Lord, when they committed all that outrage and rapine about them that we read of, and violently plundered the pots on which, in effect, *Holiness to the Lord* was written, *Zech. xiv. 20.* and took that fat to themselves which God had appointed to be burned on his altar. (2.) Eli had bolstered them up in it, by not punishing their insolence and impiety; thou for thy part *honourest thy sons above me*, i. e. thou hadst rather see my offerings disgraced by their profanation of them, than see thy sons disgraced by a legal censure upon them for so doing, which ought to have been inflicted, even to suspension and deprivation *ab officio & beneficio*. Those that allow and countenance their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, do in effect *honour them more than God*, being more tender of their reputation than of his glory, and more desirous to humour them, than to honour him. (3.) They had all shared in the gains of the sacrilege. It is to be feared, Eli himself, though he disliked and reprov'd the abuses they committed, yet did not forbear to eat of the roast-meat they sacrilegiously got, ver. 15. he was a *fat heavy man*, chap. iv. 18. and therefore it is charged upon the whole family; though Hophni and Phinehas were principally guilty, *you make your selves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings*. God gave them sufficient to feed them, but that would not suffice, they made themselves fat, and served their lusts with that which God was to be served with. See *Hosea iv. 8.*

3. He declares the cutting off of the entail of the high priesthood from his family, ver. 30. *The Lord God of Israel*, who is jealous for his own honour and Israel's, saith, and lets thee know it, that thy commission is revoked, and superseded: *I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father Ithamar*, (for from that younger son of Aaron, Eli was descended) *should walk before me for ever*. Upon what occasion the dignity of the high priesthood was transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar, doth not appear; but it seems it had been done, and Eli stood fair to have that honour perpetuated

perpetuated to his posterity; but observe, the promise carried its own condition along with it, *they shall walk before me for ever*, i. e. they shall have the honour, provided they faithfully do the service; *walking before God*, is the great condition of the covenant, *Gen. xvii. 1.* Let them set me before their face, and I will set them before my face continually, *Psal. xli. 12.* otherwise not. But now the Lord saith, *be it far from me*: Now you cast me off, you can expect no other but that I should cast you off: You will not walk before me as you should, and therefore you shall not; such wicked and abusive servants God will discard and turn out of his service. Some think there is a further reach in this recal of the grant, and that it was not only to be fulfilled shortly in the deposing of the posterity of Eli, when Zadok, who descended from Eleazar, was put in Abiathar's room, but it was to have its compleat accomplishment at length in the total abolishing of the Levitical priesthood, by the priesthood of Christ.

4. He gives a good reason for this revocation, taken from a settled and standing rule of God's government, according to which all must expect to be dealt with, like that by which Cain was tried, *Gen. iv. 7. Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.* Observe in general, 1. That God is the fountain of honour and dishonour; he can exalt the meanest, and put contempt upon the greatest. 2. As we deal with God, we must expect to be dealt with by him, and yet more favourably than we deserve. See *Psal. xviii. 25, 26.* Particularly, be it spoken, (1.) To the everlasting reputation of religion and serious godliness, that it gives honour to God, and puts honour upon men. By it we seek and serve the glory of God, and he will be behind-hand with none that do so, but here and hereafter will secure their glory. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good. If we humble and deny our selves in any thing to honour God, and have a single eye to him in it, we may depend upon this promise, he will put the best honour upon us. See *John xii. 26.* (2.) Be it spoken to the everlasting reproach of impiety and profaneness, that it doth dishonour to God, despiseth the greatest and best of beings, whom angels adore; and it will bring dishonour upon men, for they that do so, shall be lightly esteemed; not only God will lightly esteem them, that perhaps they will not value, as they that honour him, value his honour, of whom therefore it is said, *I will honour them*; but they shall be lightly esteemed by all the world, the very honour they are proud of, shall be laid in the dust; they shall see themselves despised by all mankind, their names a reproach; when they are gone, their memory shall rot, and when they rise again, it shall be to everlasting shame and contempt. The dishonour which their impotent malice puts upon God and his omnipotent justice, will return upon their own heads, *Psal. lxxix. 12.*

5. He foretels the particular judgments which should come upon his family, to the perpetual ignominy of it. A curse should be entailed upon his posterity, and a terrible curse it is, and shews how jealous God is in the matters of his worship, and how ill he takes it, when those, who are obliged by their character and profession to preserve and advance the interests of his glory, are false to their trust, and betray them. If God's ministers be vicious and profane, *how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy of*, here, and for ever, than other sinners! Let such read the doom here passed on Eli's house, and tremble. It is threatened,

1. That their power should be broken, *ver. 31. I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house*; they should be stripped of all their authority, should be deposed, and have no influence upon the people as they had had: *God would make them contemptible and base.* See *Mal. ii. 8, 9.* The sons had abused their power to oppress the people and encroach upon their rights, and the father had not used his power, as he ought to have done, to restrain and punish them, and therefore it is justly threatened, that the arm should be cut off, which was not stretched out as it should have been.

2. That their lives should be shortened: he was himself an old man; but instead of using the wisdom, gravity, experience, and authority of his age, for the service of God, and the support of religion, he had suffered the infirmities of age to make him more cool and remiss in his duty, and therefore it is here threatened, that none of his posterity should live to be old, *ver. 31, 32.* it is twice spoken, *there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever*; and again, *ver. 33. all the increase of thine house, from generation to generation, shall die in the flower of their age*, when they are in the midst of the years of their service, so that the family should not be extinct, yet it should never be considerable, nor should any of it come to be eminent in their day. Bishop Patrick relates it out of some of the Jewish writers, that long after this there being a family in Jerusalem, none of which commonly lived above eighteen years, upon search, it was found that they descended from the house of Eli, on which this sentence was passed.

3. That all their comforts should be embittered. (1.) The comfort they had in the sanctuary, and in the wealth and prosperity of that; *Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation.* This was fulfilled in the Philistines invasions, and the mischiefs they did to Israel, by which the country was impoverished, *chap. xiii. 19.* and, no doubt, the priests incomes were thereby very much impaired. The captivity of the ark was such an act of hostility, committed upon God's habitation, as broke Eli's heart. As it is a blessing to a family to

see peace upon Israel, *Psal. cxxviii. 5, 6.* so the contrary is a fore judgment upon a family, especially a family of priests. (2.) The comfort of their children. The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off by an untimely death, shall live to be a blot and burthen to the family, a scandal and vexation to his relations, he shall be to consume thine eyes, and grieve thine heart, either for his foolishness, or his sickness, or his wickedness, or his poverty. Grief for a dead child is great, but for a bad child often greater.

4. That their substance should be wasted, and they should be reduced to extremum poverty, *ver. 36. He that is left alive in thy house, shall have little joy of his life for want of a livelihood*; he shall come and crouch to the succeeding family, for a subsistence. (1.) He shall beg for the smallest alms, *a piece of silver*, and the word signifies the least piece, and *a morsel of bread.* See how this answered the sin: Eli's sons must have the best pieces of flesh, but their sons will be glad of *a morsel of bread.* Note, Want is the just punishment of wantonness. Those who could not be content without dainties and varieties, are brought, they or theirs, to want necessities, and the Lord is righteous in it. (2.) He shall beg for the meanest office. *Put me into somewhat belonging to the priesthood*; as it is in the original, *make me as one of the hired servants*, the fittest place for a prodigal. Plenty and power are forfeited, when they are abused. They should not be able to pretend to any good preferment, not to any place at the altar, but should petition for some poor employment, be the work never so hard, and the wages never so small, so they might but get bread. This, it is probable, was fully accomplished, when Abiathar, who was of Eli's race, was deposed by Solomon, for treason; and he and his turned out of office in the temple, *1 Kings ii. 26, 27.* by which it is easy to think his posterity were reduced to the extremities here described.

5. That God would shortly begin to execute these judgments in the death of Hophni and Phinehas, the sad tidings of which Eli himself should live to hear, *this shall be a sign to thee*, *ver. 34.* when thou hearest it, say, Now the word of God begins to operate, here is one threatening fulfilled, from which I infer, that all the rest will be fulfilled in their order. Hophni and Phinehas had many a time sinned together, and it is here foretold that they should die together, both in one day. Bind these tares in a bundle for the fire. It was fulfilled, *chap. iv. 11.*

Lastly, In the midst of all these threatnings against the house of Eli, here is mercy promised to Israel, *ver. 35. I will raise me up a faithful priest.* (1.) This was fulfilled in Zadok, of the family of Eleazar, who came into Abiathar's place, in the beginning of Solomon's reign, and was faithful to his trust; and the high priests were of his posterity, as long as the Levitical priesthood continued. Note, The wickedness of ministers, though it destroy themselves, yet it shall not destroy the ministry. How bad soever the officers are, the office shall continue always to the end of the world. If some falsify their trust, yet others shall be raised up that will be true to it. God's work shall never fall to the ground, for want of hands to carry it on. The high priest is here said to *walk before God's anointed*, i. e. David and his seed, because he wore the breastplate of judgment, which he was to consult, not in common cases, but for the king, in the affairs of state. Note, Notwithstanding the degeneracy we see and lament in many families, God will secure to himself a succession. If some grow worse than their ancestors, others to balance that shall grow better. (2.) It has its full accomplishment in the priesthood of Christ, that merciful and faithful high priest, whom God raised up when the Levitical priesthood was thrown off, who in all things did his father's mind, and for whom God will build a sure house, build it on a rock, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

C H A P. III.

In the foregoing chapter, we had Samuel a young priest, though by birth a Levite only, for he ministered before the Lord in a linen ephod; in this chapter we have him a young prophet, which was more; God in an extraordinary manner revealing himself to him, and in him reviving, if not commencing, prophecy in Israel. Here is, (1.) God's first manifestation of himself in an extraordinary manner to Samuel, *ver. 1—10.* (2.) The message he sent by him to Eli, *ver. 11—14.* (3.) The faithful delivery of that message to Eli, and his submission to the righteousness of God in it, *ver. 15—18.* (4.) The establishment of Samuel, to be a prophet in Israel, *ver. 19—21.*

1. **A**ND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli: and the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision.* 2. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; 3. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep: 4. That the LORD called Samuel, and he answered, *Here am I.* 5. And he ran unto Eli, and said, *Here am I, for thou calledst me.* And he said, *I called not; lie down again.* And

And he went and lay down. 6. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I, for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. 8. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I, for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. 9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down, and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10. And the LORD came, and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth.

To make way for the account of God's revealing himself first to Sael, we are here told, *ver. 1.* (1.) How industrious Samuel was in serving God, according as his place and capacity was, *ver. 1.* *The child Samuel*, though but a child, *ministred unto the Lord before Eli.* It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons, that the child Samuel shamed them. They rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministred to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them, he ministred before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel, that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example, that he did not in the least fall off, but improve, and go on. And it was a preparative for the honours God intended him; he that was thus faithful in a little, was soon after intrusted with much more. Let those that are young be humble and diligent, and they will find that the surest way to preferment. Those are fittest to rule, that have learnt to obey. (2.) How scarce a thing prophecy then was, which made the call of Samuel to be the greater surprize to himself, and the greater favour to Israel. *The word of the Lord was precious in those days.* Now and then a man of God was employed, as a messenger upon an extraordinary occasion, as *chap. ii. 27.* but there were no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse for counsel, nor from whom they might expect the discoveries of the divine will. And the rarity of prophecy made it the more precious, in the account of all those that knew how to put a right value upon it. It was precious, for what was (it seems) was private, *there was no open vision*, i. e. none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps, the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and no doubt corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy; till the decree was gone forth for the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then, as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet was raised up.

The manner of God's revealing himself to Samuel, is here related very particularly, for it was uncommon.

1. Eli was retired; Samuel had waited on him to his bed, and the rest that attended the service of the sanctuary were gone, we may suppose, to their several apartments, *ver. 2.* *Eli was laid down in his place*, went to bed betimes, being unfit for business, and soon weary of it, and, perhaps, loving his ease too well. Probably, he kept his chamber much, which gave his sons the greater liberty. And he affected retirement the more, because his eyes began to wax dim, an affliction which came justly upon him, for winking at his sons faults.

2. Samuel was laid down to sleep, in some closet near to Eli's room, as his page of the back-stairs, ready within call, if the old man should want any thing in the night, perhaps, to read to him, if he could not sleep. He chose rather to take Samuel into this office, than any of his own family; because of the towardly disposition he observed in him. When his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy. Let those that are afflicted in their children, thank God, if they have any about them, in whom they are comforted. *Samuel was laid down ere the lamp of God went out*, *ver. 3.* it should seem he lay somewhere so near the holy place, that he went to bed by that light, before any of the lamps in the branches of the candlestick went out (for the main lamp never went out) which probably was towards midnight: till that time Samuel had been employing himself in some good exercise or other, reading and prayer, or perhaps cleaning or readying the holy place; and then went softly to his bed. Then we may expect God's gracious visits, when we are constant and diligent in our duty.

3. God called him by name, and he took it for Eli's call, and ran to him, *ver. 4, 5.* Samuel lay awake in his bed, his thoughts, no doubt, well employed, as David's, *Psalms lxxiii. 6.* when the Lord called to him, bishop Patrick thinks, out of the most holy place, and so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *A voice was heard out of the temple of the Lord*, but Eli, though it is likely he lay nearer, heard it not; yet possibly it might come some other way. Hereupon we have an instance, 1. Of Samuel's industry and readiness to Eli; supposing it was he that called him, he hastened out of his warm bed, and run to him, to see if he wanted any thing, and perhaps fearing he was not well. Here *am* I, faith he. A good example to servants to come when they are called; and to the young-

ger, not only to submit to the elder, but to be careful and tender of them. 2. Of his infirmity, and unacquaintedness with the visions of the Almighty, that he took that to be only Eli's call, which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftner than we think of. God calls to us by his word, and we take it to be only the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom, that understands it to be his voice. Eli assured him he did not call him, yet did not chide him for disturbing him with being over-officious; did not call him a fool, and tell him he dreamed, but mildly bid him lie down again, he had nothing for him to do. If servants must be ready at their masters call, masters also must be tender of their servants comfort; that thy *man-servant*, and thy *maid-servant*, may rest as well as thou. So Samuel went and lay down. God calls many by the ministry of the word, and they say as Samuel did, Here *am* I; but not looking at God, nor discerning his voice in the call, the impressions of it are soon lost; they lie down again, and their convictions come to nothing.

4. The same call was repeated, and the same mistake made a second and third time, *ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.* (1.) God continued to call the child: *Yet again*, *ver. 6.* and *again the third time*, *ver. 8.* Note, The call which divine grace designs to make effectual shall be repeated till it is so, that is, till we come at the call. For the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand. (2.) Samuel was still ignorant that it was the Lord that called him, *ver. 7.* *Samuel did not yet know the Lord.* He knew the written word, and was acquainted with the mind of God in that, but he did not yet apprehend the way in which God reveals himself to his servants the prophets, especially by a *still small voice*; this was altogether new and strange to him; perhaps he had been sooner aware of a divine revelation, had it come in a dream or a vision; but this was a way he had not only not known himself, but not heard of. Those that have the greatest knowledge of divine things, must remember the time when they were as babes, unskilful in the word of righteousness: *When I was a child I understood as a child.* Yet let us not despise the day of small things; *Thus did Samuel* (so the margin reads it) *before he knew the Lord*, and before the word of the Lord was revealed unto him; thus he blundered one time after another, but afterwards he understood himself better. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful is often thus mistaken, by which means they lose the comfort of it; and the strivings of the Spirit with the consciences of sinners are likewise oft mistaken, and so the benefit of their convictions is lost: *God speaketh once, yea twice*, but *man perceiveth it not*, *Job xxxiii. 14.* (3.) Samuel went to Eli, this second and third time, the voice perhaps resembling his, and the child being very ready to him; and he tells him with great assurance, *Thou didst call me*, *ver. 6, 8.* it could be no one else. Samuel's disposition to come when he was call'd, though but by Eli, speaking him dutiful and active, qualified him for the favour now to be shewed him; God chuseth to employ such. But there was a special providence in it, that he should go thus oft to Eli, for hereby, at length, *Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child*, *ver. 8.* And 1. This would be a mortification to him, and he would apprehend it a step towards his family's being degraded, that when God had something to say, he should chuse to say it to the child Samuel, his servant that waited on him, and not to him. And it would humble him the more, when afterwards he found it was a message to himself, and yet sent him by a child. He had reason to look upon this, as a further token of God's displeasure. 2. This would put him upon enquiring, what it was that God said to Samuel, and would abundantly satisfy him of the truth and certainty of what should be delivered, and no room would be left for him to suggest, that it was but a fancy of Samuel's; for before the message was delivered, he himself perceived, that God was about to speak to him, and yet must not know what it is, till he had it from Samuel himself. Thus even the infirmities and mistakes of those whom God employs, are over-ruled by infinite Wisdom, and made serviceable to his purposes.

5. At length Samuel was put into a posture to receive a message from God, not to be lodg'd with himself and go no further; but, that he might be a compleat prophet, to be published and made an open vision. (1.) Eli perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, gave him instructions what to say, *ver. 9.* This was honestly done; that tho' it was a disgrace to him for God's call to pass him by, and be directed to Samuel, yet he put him in a way how to entertain it. Had he been envious of this honour done to Samuel, he would have done what he could to balk him of it, and since he did not perceive it himself, would have bid him lie down and sleep and never heed it, it was but a dream; but he was of a better spirit than so; gave him the best advice he could for the forwarding of his advancement: Thus the elder should, without grudging, do their utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up, tho' they see themselves likely to be darken'd and eclips'd by them. Let us never be wanting to inform and instruct those that are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, *John i. 30.* The instruction Eli gave him was, when God called the next time, to say, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* He must call himself God's servant, must desire to know the mind of God. *Speak, Lord, speak to me, speak now*: and he must prepare to hear, and

and promise to attend, *thy servant heareth*. Note, Then we may expect that God will speak to us, when we set our selves to hearken to what he saith, *Psal. lxxxv. 8. Hab. ii. 1*. When we come to read the word of God, and to attend on the preaching of it, we should come thus disposed, submitting our souls to the commanding light and power of it; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. (2.) It should seem, that God spake the fourth time, in a way somewhat different from the other; though the call was, as at other times, a call to him by name, yet now he stood and called; which intimates, that there was now some visible appearance of the divine glory to Samuel, a vision that stood before him, like that before Eliphaz, though he *could not discern the form thereof*, Job iv. 16. This satisfied him, that it was not Eli that called, for he now *saw the voice that spake with him*, as it is expressed, *Rev. i. 12*. Now also the call was doubled, Samuel, Samuel, as if God delighted in the mention of his name; or to intimate, that now he should be made to understand who spake to him. *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this*, *Psal. lxii. 11*. It was an honour to him, that God was pleased to *know him by name*, *Exod. xxxiii. 12*. and then his call was powerful and effectual, when he called him by name, and so brought it particularly to him, as Saul, Saul. Thus God called to Abraham by name, *Gen. xxii. 1*. (3.) Samuel said as he was taught, *Speak, for thy servant hears*. Note, Good words should be put into childrens mouths betimes, and apt expressions of pious and devout affections, by which they may be prepared for a better acquaintance with divine things, and trained up to a holy converse with them. Teach young people what they shall say, for *they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness*. Samuel did not now rise and run as before, when he thought Eli called, but lay still, and listened. The more sedate and composed our spirits are, the better prepared they are for divine discoveries. Let all tumultuous thoughts and passions be kept under, and every thing be quiet and serene in the soul, and then we are fit to hear from God. All must be silent when he speaks. But, observe, Samuel left out one word, he did not say, *Speak, Lord*, but only, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*, perhaps, as bishop Patrick suggests, out of uncertainty, whether it were God that spake to him or no. However, by this answer, *Speak, for thy servant hears*, way was made for the message he was now to receive, and Samuel was brought acquainted with the words of God, and visions of the Almighty. And this, *ere the lamp of God went out*, ver. 3. *in the temple of the Lord*, which some of the Jewish writers put a mystical sense upon; before the fall of Eli, and the eclipsing of the Urim and Thummim, for some time thereby, God called Samuel, and made him an oracle; whence they have an observation among their doctors, *That the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down*, *Eccl. i. 5*. that is, say they, ere God maketh the sun of one righteous man to set, he makes the sun of another righteous man to rise. *Smith ex Kimchi*.

11. ¶ And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. 12. In that day, I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. 14. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. 15. ¶ And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD: and Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. 16. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel my son. And he answered, Here am I. 17. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me, of all the things that he said unto thee. ¶ 18. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Here is, 1. The message which, after all this introduction, God delivered to Samuel, concerning Eli's house. God did not come to him now, to tell him how great a man he should be in his day, what a figure he should make, and what a blessing he should be in Israel; young people have commonly a great curiosity to be told their fortune, but God came to Samuel, not to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in his service, and send him of an errand to another person, which was much better; and yet the matter of this first message, which, no doubt, made a very great impression upon him, might be of good use to him afterwards, when his own sons prove, though not so bad as Eli's, yet not so good as they should have been, chap. viii. 3.

The message is short, not near so long as that which the man of God brought, chap. ii. 27. For Samuel, being a child, it could not be expected, he should remember a long message, and God con-

sidered his frame. The memories of children must not be overcharged, no not with divine things. But it is a sad message, a message of wrath, to ratify the message in the former chapter, and to bind on the sentence there pronounced, because perhaps Eli did not give so much regard to that as he ought to have done. Divine threatenings, the less they are heeded, the surer they will come, and the heavier they will fall. Reference is here had to what was there said both concerning the sin, and concerning the punishment.

1. Concerning the sin, it is the *iniquity that he knoweth*, ver. 13. The man of God told him of it, and many a time his own conscience had told him of it. O what a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us, concerning which we may say, it is the *iniquity which our own heart knoweth*; we are conscious to our selves of it! In short, the iniquity was this, *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*. Or, as it is in the Hebrew, *he frowned not upon them*. If he did shew his dislike of their wicked courses, yet not to that degree that he ought to have done: he did reprove them, but he did not punish them for the mischief they did, nor deprive them of their power to do mischief, which, as a father, high priest, and judge, he might have done. Note, 1. Sinners do by their own wickedness make themselves vile. They debauch themselves, for *every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust*, James i. 14. and thereby they debase themselves, and make themselves not only mean, but odious to the holy God, and holy men and angels. Sin is a vile thing, and vilifies men more than any thing, *Psal. xv. 4*. Eli's sons made light of God, and made his offerings vile in the peoples eyes, but the shame returned into their own bosom, they *made themselves vile*. 2. Those that do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in the power of their hand to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as accessaries. Those in authority will have a great deal to answer for, if they make not the sword, they bear, a *terror to evil workers*.

2. Concerning the punishment, it is *that which I have spoken concerning his house*, ver. 12. and ver. 13. *I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever*, i. e. that a curse should be entailed upon his family from generation to generation. The particulars of this curse we had before, they are not here repeated, but it is added,

1. That when that sentence began to be executed, it would be very dreadful and amazing to all Israel, ver. 11. *Both the ears of every one that hears it shall tingle*. Every Israelite would be struck with terror and astonishment, to hear of the slaying of Eli's sons, the breaking of Eli's neck, and the dispersion of Eli's family. Lord, How terrible art thou in thy judgments! If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry! Note, God's judgments upon others, should affect us with a holy fear, *Psal. cxix. 120*.

2. That these direful first-fruits of the execution, would be certain earnest of the progress and full accomplishment of it. *When I begin, I will proceed and make an end* of all I have threatened, ver. 12. It is intimated, that it might possibly be some time before he would begin, but let them not call that forbearance an acquittance, nor that reprieve a pardon, for when at length he doth begin, he will make thorow work of it; and though he stay long, he will strike home.

3. That no room should be left for hope that this sentence might be reversed, and the execution stayed or mitigated, ver. 14. 1. God would not revoke the sentence, for he backed it with an oath: *I have sworn to the house of Eli*; and God will not go back from what he hath sworn, either in mercy or judgment. 2. He would never come to a composition for the forfeiture. The *iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice, nor offering for ever*. No atonement shall be made for the sin, nor any abatement of the punishment. This was the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, that there were iniquities which they did not reach, which they would not purge; *but the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, and secures all those that by faith are interested in it, from that eternal death, which is the wages of sin.

2. The delivery of this message to Eli. Observe,

1. Samuel's modest concealment of it, ver. 15. (1.) *He lay till the morning*, and we may well suppose he lay awake, pondering on what he had heard, repeating it to himself, and considering what use he must make of it. After we have received the spiritual food of God's word, it is good to compose our selves, and give it time to digest. (2.) *He opened the doors of the house of the Lord*, in the morning, as he used to do, being up first in the tabernacle. That he should do so at other times, was an instance of an extraordinary towardness in a child, but that he should do so this morning, was an instance of great humility. God had highly honoured him above all the children of his people, yet he was not proud of the honour, nor puffed up with it; did not think himself too great, and too good, to be employed in these mean and servile offices, but, as cheerfully as ever, went and opened the doors of the tabernacle. Note, Those whom God manifests himself to, he makes and keeps low in their own eyes, and willing to stoop to any thing by which they may be serviceable to his glory, though but as door-keepers in his house. One would have expected, that Samuel should have been so full of his vision, as to forget his ordinary service; that he should have gone among his companions, as one in an ecstasy, to tell them what converse he had had with God this night, but he modestly keeps it to himself, tells the vision to no man, but silently goes on in his business. Our secret communion with God, is not to be pro-

claimed upon the house-tops. (3.) *He feared to shew Eli the vision.* If he were afraid Eli would be angry with him, and chide him, it will give us cause to suspect, that Eli used to be as severe with this towardsly child, as he was indulgent to his own wicked sons, and that will bear hard upon him. But we will suppose, it was rather, because he was afraid to grieve and trouble the good old man, that he was so shy. If he had run presently with the tidings to Eli, it would have looked, as if he had desired the woful day, and hoped to build his own family upon the ruin of Eli's, therefore it became him not to be forward to do it; no good man can take pleasure in bringing evil tidings, especially not Samuel to Eli, the pupil to the tutor, whom he loves and honours.

2. Eli's careful enquiry into it, *ver. 16, 17.* as soon as ever he heard Samuel stirring, he called for him, probably, to his bed-side; and having perceived before, that God had spoken to him, he obliged him, not only by importunity, *I pray thee, hide it not from me,* but finding him timorous and backward, by an adjuration likewise, *God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me:* he had reason enough to fear, that the message prophesied no good concerning him, but evil; and yet, because it was a message from God, he could not contentedly be ignorant of it. A good man desires to be acquainted with all the will of God, whether it make for him, or against him. His adjuration, *God do so to thee, if thou hide any thing from me,* may intimate the fearful doom of unfaithful watchmen; if they warn not sinners, they bring upon themselves that wrath and curse, which they should have denounced, in God's name, against those that go on still in their trespasses.

3. Samuel's faithful delivery of his message at last, *ver. 18.* *He told him every whit:* when he saw he must tell him, he never minced the matter, nor offered to make it better than it was, to nullify that which was sharp, or to gild the bitter pill; but delivered the message as plainly and fully as he received it, *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God.* Christ's ministers must deal thus faithfully.

4. Eli's pious acquiescence in it; he did not question Samuel's integrity, was not cross with him, nor had he any thing to object against the equity of the sentence; he did not complain of the punishment, as Cain did, that it was greater than either he deserved or could bear, but patiently submitted, and accepted the punishment of his iniquity, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* He understood the sentence to intend only a temporal punishment, and the entail of disgrace and poverty upon his posterity, and not a final separation of them from the favour of God, and therefore he cheerfully submitted; did not repine, because he knew the ill merits of his family; nor did he now intercede for the reversing of the sentence, because God had ratified it with a solemn oath, of which he would not repent; he therefore composeth himself into a humble resignation to God's will, as Aaron, in a case not much unlike, *Lev. x. 3. He held his peace.* In a few words, 1. He lays down this satisfying truth, *It is the Lord;* it is he that pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal, and against whose sentence there lies no exception. It is he that will execute the judgment, whose power cannot be resisted, his justice arraigned, nor his sovereignty contested. *It is the Lord,* who will thus sanctify and glorify himself, and it is highly fit he should. *It is the Lord,* with whom there is no unrighteousness, who never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves. 2. He infers from it this satisfying conclusion, *Let him do what seemeth him good;* I have nothing to say against his proceedings, he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore *his will be done. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.* Thus we ought to quiet our selves under God's rebukes, and never to strive with our maker.

19. And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. 20. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. 21. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the LORD.

Samuel being thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, we have here an account of the further honour done him as a prophet.

1. God did him honour. Having begun to favour him, he carried on and crown'd his own work in him, *ver. 19. Samuel grew, for the Lord was with him.* All our increase in wisdom and grace is owing to the presence of God with us; it is all in all to our growth. God honoured Samuel, (1.) By further manifestations of himself to him. Samuel had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service, *ver. 21. The Lord revealed himself again to Samuel in Shiloh.* Note, God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright. (2.) By fulfilling what he spake by him, *ver. 19. God did let none of his words fall to the ground;* whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true, and was accomplished in its season. Probably, there were some remarkable instances of the truth of Samuel's predictions that happened presently, which confirmed those that were after-

wards to be fulfilled, and gave general satisfaction of his Mission. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers, *Isa. xlv. 26.* and will do what he hath said.

2. Israel did him honour. They all knew, and owned, *that Samuel was established to be a prophet,* *ver. 20.* (1.) He grew famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they came home. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people, and bring them, as much as any thing, and as soon into reputation. Them that honour God he will honour. (2.) He grew useful, and very serviceable to his generation. He that began betimes to be good, soon came to do good. His established commission from God, and established reputation with the people, gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel. When old Eli was rejected, young Samuel was established; for God will never leave himself without witness, nor his church without a guide.

C H A P. IV.

The predictions in the foregoing chapters, concerning the ruin of Eli's house, here begin to be fulfilled; just how long after doth not appear; but it was not long. Such sinners God oft makes quick work with. Here is (1.) The disgrace and loss Israel sustained in a rencounter with the Philistines, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Their foolish project to fortify themselves, by bringing the ark of God into their camp, upon the shoulders of Hophni and Phinehas, ver. 3, 4. which made them secure, ver. 5. and struck a fear into the Philistines, but such a fear as animated them, ver. 6—9. (3.) The fatal consequences of it, Israel was beaten, and the ark taken prisoner, ver. 10, 11. (4.) The tidings of this brought to Shiloh, and the sad reception of those tidings. 1. The city was put into confusion, ver. 12, 13. 2. Eli fainted away, fell and broke his neck, ver. 14.—18. 3. His daughter in law fell in labour upon it, bore a son, but died presently, ver. 19—22. These were the things which would make the ears of those that heard them to tingle.

1. **A**ND the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. 2. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. 3. ¶ And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. 4. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there, with the ark of the covenant of God. 5. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. 6. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. 7. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Wo unto us; for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8. Wo unto us: Who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9. Be strong and quit your selves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit your selves like men, and fight.

The first words which relate to Samuel, that his word came to all Israel, seem not to have any reference to the following story, as if it were by any direction of his, that the Israelites went out against the Philistines: had they consulted him, though but newly initiated, as a prophet, it might have stood them in more stead than the ark did; but perhaps the princes of Israel despised his youth, and would not have recourse to him as an oracle, and he did not as yet interpose in publick affairs; nor do we find any mention of his name from henceforward, till some years after, *chap. vii. 3.* only *his word came to all Israel, i. e.* people from all parts, that were piously disposed, had recourse to him as a prophet, and advised with him. Perhaps, it is meant of his prophecy against the house of Eli, that was generally known and talked of, and all that were serious and observing compared the events here related, when they came to pass, with that prophecy, and saw it accomplished in them.

Here is, 1. A war entered into with the Philistines, *ver. 1.* It was an attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppression, and would

have sped better, if they had first repented and reformed; and so begun their work at the right end. It is computed, that this was about the middle of the forty years dominion, that the Philistines had over Israel, *Judg. xiii. 1.* and soon after the death of Sampson, so bishop Patrick, who thinks, the slaughter he made at his death, might encourage this attempt: but Dr. Lightfoot reckons it forty years after Sampson's death, for so long Eli judged, *ver. 18.*

2. The defeat of Israel in that war, *ver. 2.* Israel, who were the aggressors, was smitten, and had four thousand men killed upon the spot. God had promised that one of them should chase a thousand; but now quite contrary, *Israel is smitten before the Philistines.* Sin, the accursed thing, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage against them they could wish for.

3. The measures they concerted for another engagement; a council of war was called, and, instead of resolving to fast and pray, and amend their lives, so ill taught were they, and no wonder, when they had such teachers, that, (1.) They quarrelled with God for appearing against them, *ver. 2. Wherefore has the Lord smitten us?* If they meant this as an enquiry into the cause of God's displeasure, they needed not go far to find that out; it was plain enough, Israel had sinned, though they were not willing to see it, and own it; but it rather seems, that they expostulate boldly with God about it, are displeased at what God had done, and dispute it with him. They own the hand of God in their trouble, so far was right, it is the Lord that has smitten us; but instead of submitting to it, they quarrel with it, and speak as those that were angry at him and his providence, and not aware of any just provocation they had given him. Wherefore shall we, that are Israelites, be smitten before the Philistines? How absurd and unjust is it! Note, The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, *Prov. xix. 3.* and finds fault with him. (2.) They imagined they could oblige him to appear for them the next time, by bringing the ark into their camp. The elders of Israel were so ignorant and foolish, as to propose it, *ver. 3.* and the people soon put it in execution, *ver. 4.* they sent to Shiloh for the ark, and Eli had not courage enough to oppose it, but sent his ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas, along with it, at least, permitted them to go, though he knew that wherever they went, the curse of God went along with them. Now see here, 1. The mighty veneration they had for the ark. O send for that, and that will do wonders for us. The ark was, by institution, a visible token of God's presence, God had said that he would dwell between the cherubims which were over the ark, and were carried along with it; now they thought, that by paying a great respect to this sacred chest, they should prove themselves to be Israelites indeed, and effectually engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. Note, It is common for those that have estranged themselves from the vitals of religion, to discover a great fondness for the rituals, and external observances of it; for those that even deny the power of godliness, not only to have, but to have in admiration, the form of it. The temple of the Lord is cried up, and the ark of the Lord stickled for, with a great deal of seeming zeal, by multitudes, that have no regard at all for the Lord of the temple, and the God of the ark; as if a fiery concern for the name of christianity, would atone for a profane contempt of the thing. And yet indeed they did but make an idol of the ark, and looked upon it to be as much an image of the God of Israel, as those which the heathen worshipped were of their gods. To worship the true God, and not to worship him as God, is in effect not to worship him at all. (2.) Their egregious folly in thinking that if they had that in their camp, it would certainly save them out of the hand of their enemies, and bring victory back to their side. For, 1. When the ark set forward, Moses prayed, *Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered,* well knowing, that it was not the ark moving with them, but God appearing for them, that must give them success; and here were no proper means used to engage God to favour them with his presence, what good then would the ark do them? the shell without the kernel? 2. They were so far from having God's leave to remove his ark, that he had plainly enough intimated to them in his law, that when they were settled in Canaan, his ark should be settled in the place that he should chuse, *Deut. xxii. 5, 11.* and that they must come to it, and not it to them. How then could they expect any advantage by it, when they had not a just and legal possession of it? nor any warrant to stir it from its place? Instead of honouring God by what they did, they really affronted him. Nay, 3. If there had been nothing else to invalidate their expectations from the ark, how could they expect it should bring a blessing, when Hophni and Phinehas were the men that brought it. It would have given too much countenance to their villainy, if the ark had done any kindness to Israel, while it was in the hands of those graceless priests.

4. The great joy that was in the camp of Israel, when the ark was brought into it, *ver. 5. they shouted, so that the earth rang again.* Now they thought themselves sure of victory, and therefore gave a triumphant shout before the battle, as if the day were without fail their own, intending, by this mighty shout, to animate themselves, and their own forces, and to intimidate their adversaries. Note, Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them, as if those would infallibly save them; and as if the ark, God's throne, in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh be upon the throne in the heart.

5. The consternation which the bringing of the ark into the camp of Israel put the Philistines into. The two armies lay so near encamped, that the Philistines heard the shout the Israelites gave on this great occasion, soon understood what it was they triumphed in, *ver. 6.* and they were afraid of the consequences. For, (1.) It had never been done before in their days. *God is come into their camp,* and therefore *wo unto us,* *ver. 7.* and again, *wo unto us,* *ver. 8.* The name of the God of Israel was formidable, even to those that worshipped other gods, and some apprehension, even the Infidels had, of the danger of contending with him. Natural conscience suggests this, that those are in a woful condition who have God against them; yet see what gross notions they had of the divine presence, as if the God of Israel were not as much in the camp before the ark came thither; which may very well be excused in them, since the notions the Israelites themselves had of that presence were no better. O, say they, this is a new design upon us, more frightful than all their stratagems, for *there has not been such a thing heretofore*; this was the most effectual course they could take to dispirit our men, and weaken their hands. (2.) When it had been done in the days of old, it had wrought wonders, *ver. 8. These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.* Here they were as much out in their history, as in their divinity; the plagues of Egypt were inflicted before the ark was made, and before Israel came into the wilderness; but some confused traditions they had of wonders wrought by or for Israel, when this ark was carried before them, which they attributed, not to Jehovah, but to the ark. Now say they, *Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods?* taking the ark for God, as well they might, when the Israelites themselves idolized it. Yet it should seem they scarce believed themselves, when they spoke thus formidably of these mighty Gods, but only bantered; for, instead of retreating, or proposing conditions of peace, which they would have done, had they been really convinced of the power of Israel's God, they stirred up one another to fight so much the more stoutly: this surprizing difficulty did but sharpen their resolution, *ver. 9. Be strong, and quit your selves like men*; the commanders inspiring bold and generous thoughts into the minds of their soldiers, when they bid them remember how they had lorded it over Israel, and what an intolerable grief and shame it would be, if they sneaked now, and suffered Israel to lord it over them.

10. ¶ And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

Here is a short account of the issue of this battle.

1. Israel was smitten, the army dispersed, and totally routed, not retiring into their camp, as before, *ver. 2.* when they hoped to rally again, but returning to their tents, every man shifting for his own safety, and making the best of his way home, despairing to make head any more: and thirty thousand were slain in the field of battle, *ver. 10.* Israel was put to the worse, (1.) Though they had the better cause, were the people of God, and the Philistines were uncircumcised; they stood up in necessary defence of their just rights and liberties against invaders, and yet they failed of success, for *their rock had sold them.* A good cause often suffers for the sake of the bad men that undertake it. (2.) Though they had the greater confidence, and a better heart on it. They shouted while the Philistines trembled, and yet, when God pleased so to order it, the Philistines' terrors were turned into triumphs, and Israel's shouts into lamentations. (3.) Though they had the ark of God with them. External privileges will secure none that abuse them, and do not live up to them. The ark in the camp will add nothing to its strength, when there is an Achan in it.

2. The ark it self was taken by the Philistines, and Hophni and Phinehas, who, it is likely, stuck close to it, and when it was in danger, ventured far in the defence of it, because by it they got their living, were both slain, *ver. 11.* To this sad event the Psalmist refers, *Psal. lxxviii. 61, 64. He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand. Their priests fell by the sword.* 1. The slaughter of the priests, considering their ill character, was no great loss to Israel, but it was a dreadful judgment upon the house of Eli. The word which God had spoken was fulfilled in it, *chap. ii. 3, 4. This shall be a sign unto thee, an earnest of the judgments threatened, Thy two sons shall die both in one day, and so shall all the increase of thy house die in the flower of their age,* *ver. 33.* If Eli had done his duty, and put them, as polluted, from the priesthood, (*Neh. vii. 64.*) they might have lived, though in disgrace; but now God takes the work into his own hands, and chaſeth them out of the world by the sword of the uncircumcised, *The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth.* It is true, the sword devours one as well another, but these were waited for of the sword, marked for vengeance. They were out of their place, what had they to do in the camp? When men leave the way of their duty, they shut themselves out of God's protection. But this was not all; they had betrayed the ark, by bringing it into danger, without

without a warrant from God, and this filled the measure of their iniquities. But, 2. The taking of the ark was a very great judgment upon Israel, and a certain token of God's hot displeasure against them. Now they are made to see their folly in trusting to their external privileges, when they had by their wickedness forfeited them; and fancying that the ark would save them, when God was departed from them. Now they are made to reflect, with the utmost regret, upon their own rashness and presumption, in bringing the ark into the camp, and so exposing it; and with a thousand times they had left it where God had fixed it. Now they are convinced, that God will not be prescribed to, by vain and foolish men, and that, though he has bound us to his ark, he has not bound himself to it, but will rather deliver it into the hands of his sworn enemies, than suffer it to be profaned by his false friends, and countenance their superstition. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God, under the cloke of a visible profession, for there will be those cast into utter darkness, that have *eaten and drunk in Christ's presence*.

12 ¶ And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side, watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out. 14. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. 16. And the man said unto Eli, *I am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? 17. And the messenger answered, and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. 18. And it came to pass when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

Tidings are here brought to Shiloh of the fatal issue of their battle with the Philistines. Ill news flies fast. This soon spread through all Israel, every man that fled to his tent, brought it with too plain a proof of it to his neighbours: but no place was so nearly concerned as Shiloh, thither therefore an express posted away immediately; it was a man of Benjamin, the Jews fancy it was Saul; he *rent his clothes and put earth upon his head*; by these signs to proclaim to all that saw him as he ran, the sorrowful news, and to shew how much himself was affected with it, *ver. 12*. He went straight to Shiloh with it; and here we are told,

1. How the city resented it. *Eli sat in the gate*, *ver. 13*. 18. but the messenger was loth to tell him first, and therefore passed him by, and told it in the city, with all the aggravating circumstances; and now both *the ears of every one that heard it tingled*, as was foretold, *chap. iii. 11*. their hearts trembled, and every face gathered blackness: *All the city cried out*, *ver. 13*. and well they might, for besides that this was a calamity to all Israel, it was a particular loss to Shiloh, and the ruin of that place: For though the ark was soon rescued out of the hands of the Philistines, yet it never returned to Shiloh again; their candlestick was removed out of its place; because they had *left their first love*, and their city dwindled and sunk and came to nothing. Now God *forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh*, they having driven him from them, and the tribe of Ephraim which had for three hundred and forty years been blessed with the presence of the ark in it, lost the honour, *Psal. lxxviii. 60. 67*. and sometime after it was transferred to the tribe of Judah, *the mount Zion which he loved*, as it follows there, *ver. 68*. because the men of Shiloh knew *not the day of their visitation*. This abandoning of Shiloh, Jerusalem is long after minded of, and bid to take warning by, *Jer. vii. 12*. *Go see what I did to Shiloh*. From this day, this fatal day, let the desolations of Shiloh be dated, they had therefore reason enough to cry out, when they heard that the ark was taken.

2. What a fatal blow it was to old Eli. Let us see,

1. With what fear he expected the tidings. Though old, and blind, and heavy, yet he could not keep his chamber, when he was sensible the glory of Israel lay at stake, but placed himself by the way-side, to receive the first intelligence; for *his heart trembled for the ark of God*, *ver. 13*. His careful thoughts represented to him what a dishonour it will be to God, and what an irreparable loss to Israel, if the ark fall into the Philistines hands; with what profane triumphs it will be told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon: He also apprehends what imminent danger there was of it; Israel had forfeited the ark, his own sons especially, the Philistines would aim at it; and now the threatening comes to his mind, that he should *see an enemy in God's habitation*, *chap. ii. 32*, and, per-

haps, his own heart reproached him for not using his authority, to prevent the carrying of the ark into the camp; all these things made him tremble. Note, All good men lay the interests of God's church nearer their hearts, than any secular interest or concern of their own, and cannot but be in pain and fear for them, if at any time they are in peril. How can we be easy if the ark be not safe?

2. With what grief he received the tidings. Though he could not see, he could hear the *tumult and crying of the city*, and perceiv'd it to be the voice of lamentation, and mourning, and wo; like a careful magistrate, he asks, *What means the noise of this tumult?* *ver. 14*. is told, there is an express come from the army, who relates the story to him very distinctly, and with great assurance, having himself been an eye-witness of it, *ver. 16, 17*. the account of the defeat of the army, and the slaughter of a great number of the soldiers, was very grievous to him as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, of whom he had been so indulgent, and who he had reason to fear died impenitent, touch'd him in a tender part as a father; yet it was not for these that his heart trembled, there is a greater concern upon his spirit which swallows up the lesser; he doth not interrupt the narrative with any passionate lamentations for his sons, like David for Absalom, but waits for the end of the story, not doubting but that the messenger, being an Israelite, would, without being asked, say something of the ark; and if he could but have said, Yet the ark of God is safe, and we are bringing that home; his joy for that would have overcome his grief for all the other disasters, and have made him easy; but when the messenger concludes his story with that, *the ark of God is taken*, he is struck to the heart, his spirits fail, and, it should seem, he swooned away, fell off his seat, and partly with the fainting, and partly with the fall, he died immediately, and never spoke word more. His heart was broke first, and then his neck. So fell the high priest and judge of Israel, so fell his heavy head, when he had lived within two of an hundred years; so fell the crown from his head when he had judged Israel about forty years: Thus did his sin set under a cloud, thus was the folly and wickedness of those sons of his, whom he had indulged, his ruin at last. Thus doth God sometimes set marks of his displeasure upon good men in this life, who have miscarried themselves, that others may hear and fear and take warning. A man may die miserably, and yet not die eternally; may come to an untimely end, and yet the end be peace. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Eli died the death of an unredeemed ass, whose neck was to be broke, *Exod. xiii. 13*. Yet we must observe, to Eli's praise, that it was the loss of the ark that was his death, not the slaughter of his sons: He doth in effect say, Let me fall with the ark; for what pious Israelite can live with any comfort when God's ordinances are removed? Farewel all in this world, even life it self, if the ark be gone.

19. ¶ And his daughter in law, Phinehas wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law, and her husband were dead, she bowed her self and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 20. And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her, said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 21. And she named the child I-chabod, saying, the glory is departed from Israel: (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband,) 22. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

We have here another melancholy story, that carries on the desolations of Eli's house, and the sorrowful resentment the tidings of the ark's captivity met with. It is concerning the wife of Phinehas, one of those ungracious sons of Eli, that had brought all this mischief on Israel. It cost her her life, though young, as well as her father in law, that was old; for many a green head, as well as many a hoary head, has been brought by sorrow to the grave: It worketh death.

By what is here related of her, it appears,

1. That she was a woman of a very tender spirit. Providence so ordered it, that just at this time she was near her counts end; and our Saviour hath said, *Wo to them that are with child, or give suck*, in such days as these, *Matt. xxiv. 19*. and so little joy will there then be in the birth, even of a man-child, that it will be said, *Blessed are the wombs that bear not*, *Luke xxiii. 29*. The amazing news coming in this unhappy juncture, it put her into labour, as great frights, or other strong passions, sometimes do: When she heard of the death of her father in law, whom she revered, and her husband, whom, as bad as he was, she loved, but especially of the loss of the ark, *she travailed, for her pains came thick upon her*, *ver. 19*. and the tidings so seized her spirits, at a time, when they needed all possible supports, that though she had strength to bear the child, she soon after fainted and died away, being very willing to let life go, when she had lost the greatest comforts of her life. Those who are drawing near to that needful hour, have need to treasure up for themselves comforts from the covenant of grace, to balance, not only the usual sorrows, but any thing extraordinary, that

that may add to the grief, which they do not foresee. Faith, at such a time, will keep from fainting, *Psalms* xxvii. 13.

2. That she was a woman of a very gracious spirit, though matched to an ill husband: Her concern for the death of her husband, and father in law, was an evidence of her natural affection, but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark, was an evidence of her pious and devout affection to God, and sacred things. The former helped to hasten her travel, but it appears by her dying words, that the latter lay nearer her heart, *ver.* 22. *She said, the glory is departed from Israel*, not lamenting so much the sinking of that particular family, to which she was related, as the general calamity of Israel, in the captivity of the ark. This, this was it, that was her grief, that was her death.

1. This made her regardless of her child. The women that attended her, who, it is likely, were some of the first rank in the city, encouraged her, and, thinking that her concern was mostly about the issue of her pains, when the child was born, *said unto her, Fear not*, now the worst is past, *for thou hast born a son*, and, perhaps, it was her first-born, *but she answered not, neither did she regard it*. The sorrows of her travail, if she had had no other, would have been forgotten, *for joy that a man-child was born into the world*, *John* xvi. 21. But what is that joy, (1.) To one that feels her self dying; no joy, but that which is spiritual and divine, will stand us in any stead then; death is too serious a thing, to admit the relish of any earthly joy, it is all flat and tasteless then. (2.) What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark! Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark is gone, and is a prisoner in the land of the Philistines. What pleasure can we take in our creature comforts and enjoyments, if we want God's word and ordinances, especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance! *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to such heavy hearts*.

2. This made her give her child a name, which should perpetuate the remembrance of the calamity, and her sense of it. She has nothing to say to the child, only it being her province, now her husband was dead, to name the child, she orders them to call it *I-chabod*, *i. e. Where is the glory?* Or, *Alas for the glory*: or, *There is no glory*, *ver.* 21. which she thus explains with her dying lips, *ver.* 22. *The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken*. Call the child inglorious, for so he is; the beauty of Israel is gone, and there appears no hope of ever retrieving it; never let the name of an Israelite, much less a priest, carry glory in it any more, now the ark is taken. Note, 1. The purity and plenty of God's ordinances, and the tokens of his presence in them, are the glory of any people, much more so than their wealth and trade, and interest among the nations. 2. Nothing is more cutting, more killing, to a faithful Israelite, than the want and loss of these. If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Wo unto us if he depart.

CHAP. V.

It is now time to enquire what is become of the ark of God; we cannot but think that we shall hear more of that sacred treasure. I should have thought the next news would have been, that all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, had gathered together as one man, with a resolution to bring it back, or die in the attempt: but we find not any motion made of that kind, so little was there of zeal or courage left among them. Nay, we do not find, that they desired a treaty with the Philistines, about the ransom of it, or offered any thing in lieu of it; it is gone, and let it go. Many have softness enough to lament the loss of the ark, that have not hardness enough to take one step towards the retrieve of it, no more than Israel here. If the ark will help it self, it may, for they will not help it. Unworthy they were of the name of Israelites, that could thus tamely part with the glory of Israel. God would therefore take the work into his own hands, and plead his own cause, since men would not appear for him. We are told in this chapter, (1.) How the Philistines triumphed over the ark, *ver.* 1, 2, and, (2.) How the ark triumphed over the Philistines. (1.) Over Dagon their God, *ver.* 3—5. (2.) Over the Philistines themselves, who were sorely plagued with Emerods, and made weary of the ark; the men of Ashdod first, *ver.* 6, 7. then the men of Gath, *ver.* 8, 9. and lastly those of Ekron, which forced them at length upon a resolution to send the ark back to the land of Israel; for when God judgeth, he will overcome.

1. **A**ND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. 2. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth, before the ark of the LORD: and they took Dagon and set him in his place again. 4. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground, before the ark of the LORD: and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hand were cut off upon the threshold, only the stump of Dagon was

left to him. 5. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod, unto this day.

Here is, 1. The Philistines triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud to be now masters of, because, before the battle, they were possessed with a mighty fear of it, *chap.* iv. 7. When they had it in their hands, God restrained them, that they did not offer any violence to it, did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but shewed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and to read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone, that were in it, we are not told; perhaps, they looked no further than the golden outside, and the cherubims that covered it, like children, that are more affected with the fine binding of their bibles, than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was, there they placed the ark of God, *by Dagon*, *ver.* 2. Either, (1.) As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious respects to, in conjunction with Dagon; for the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them, and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel, when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all, if he be not worshipped alone. *The Lord our God is one Lord*. Or rather, (2.) They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour to Dagon their god, to whom, no doubt, they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done, when they had taken Sampson, *Judg.* xvi. 23, 24. boasting, that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion, so now, over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! What a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill deity? So it is, because God will shew of how little account the ark of the covenant is, if the covenant it self be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to, or we can trust to. So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affronted him, and might get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, he will next deal with those that abused it; and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the wrath of man shall praise him; and he is bringing about his own glory, even then when he seems to neglect it, *Psalms* lxxvi. 10. Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

2. The ark's triumph over Dagon. Once and again Dagon was made to fall before it. If they design'd to do honour to the ark, God hereby shewed that he valued not their honour, nor would he accept it, for he will be worshipped not with any god, but above all gods. *He owes a shame* (as bishop Hall expresses it) *to those who will be making matches betwixt himself and Belial*. But they really designed to affront it, and though for some hours Dagon stood by the ark, and, it is likely, stood above it, the ark at its footstool; yet the next morning, when the worshippers of Dagon came to pay their devotions to his shrine, they found their triumphing short, *Job* xx. 5.

1. Dagon, that is the image, for that was all the god, was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark, *ver.* 3. God had seemed to forget his ark, but see how the Psalmist speaks of his appearing at last to vindicate his own honour. When he had delivered his strength into captivity, and all seemed going to wrack and ruin, *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine*, *Psalms* lxxviii. 60, 65. And therefore he prevented the utter desolations of the Jewish church, because he feared the wrath of the enemy, *Deut.* xxxii. 26, 27. Great care was taken in setting up the images of their gods to fix them. The prophet takes notice of it, *Isa.* xli. 7. *He fastned it with nails that it should not be moved*; and again, *chap.* xlvi. 7. and yet Dagon's fastnesses stood him in no stead; the ark of God triumphs over him upon his own dunghill, in his own temple, down he comes before the ark, directly towards it, though the ark was set on one side of him, as it were pointing to the conqueror to whom he is constrained to yield and do obeisance. Note, The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be run down, and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident, that the day of their triumph will come. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Dagon, by falling prostrate before the ark of God, which was a posture of adoration, did, as it were, direct his worshippers to pay their homage to the God of Israel, as greater than all gods. See *Exod.* xviii. 11.

2. The priests that found their idol on the floor, make all the haste they can, before it be known, to set him in his place again. A sorry silly thing to make a god of, that when he was down, wanted help to get up again; and sottish wretches those were, that could pray for help from that idol, that needed, and, in effect, implored their help. How could they attribute their victory to the power of Dagon, when Dagon himself cannot keep his own ground before the ark? But they are resolved Dagon shall be their god still, and therefore

therefore set him in his place. Bishop Hall observes hence, It is just with God, that those which want grace shall want wit too; and it is the power of superstition, to turn men into the stocks and stones they worship: *They that make them are like unto them.* What is it that the great upholders of the antichristian kingdom are doing at this day; but heaving Dagon up, and labouring to set him in his place again; and healing the deadly wound that has been given to the beast; but if the reformation be the cause of God, before which it has begun to fall, it shall not prevail, but shall surely fall before it.

3. The next night Dagon fell the second time, *ver. 4.* they rose early, either as usual to make their addresses to their god, or earlier than usual, being impatient to know whether Dagon had kept his standing this night; and to their great confusion, they find his case now worse than before; whether the matter of which the image was made was apt to break or no, so it was, that the head and hands were cut off upon the threshold. So that nothing remained but the stump, or, as the margin reads it, the fishy part of Dagon; for (as many learned men conjecture) the upper part of this image was in a human shape, the lower in the shape of a fish; as mermaids are painted. Such strong delusions were idolaters given up to, so vain were they in their imagination, and so wretchedly darkened were their foolish hearts, as to worship the images, not only of creatures, but of nonentities, the nicer figments of fancy. Well, the mishapen monster is by this fall made to appear, (1.) Very ridiculous and worthy to be despised. A pretty figure Dagon made now, when the fall had anatomiz'd him, and shewed how the human part and the fishy part were artificially put together, which, perhaps, the ignorant devote's had been made to believe was done by miracle. (2.) Very impotent, and unworthy to be prayed to, or trusted to, for his losing his head and hands spoke him utterly destitute both of wisdom and power, and for ever disabled either to advise or act for them. This they got by setting Dagon in his place again; they had better have let him alone when he was down: But they can speed no better that contend with God, and will set up that which he is throwing down, *Mal. i. 4.* God by this magnified his ark and made it honourable then, when they vilified and made it contemptible: He also shewed what will be the end of all that which is set up in opposition to him; *Gird your selves, but ye shall be broken to pieces, Isa. viii. 9.*

4. The threshold of Dagon's temple was ever after looked upon as sacred, and not to be trodden on, *ver. 5.* Some think, reference is had to this superstitious usage of Dagon's worshippers, *Zeph. i. 9.* where God threatens to punish them that, in imitation of them, leaped over the threshold. One would have thought, this incontestible proof of the ark's victory over Dagon should have convinced the Philistines of their folly in worshipping such a senseless thing, and that from henceforward they should have paid their homage to the conqueror; but, instead of being reformed, they were hardened in their idolatry, and, as evil men and seducers use to do, went worse and worse, *2 Tim. iii. 13.* Instead of despising Dagon for the threshold's sake that beheaded him, they are almost ready to worship the threshold, because it was the block on which it was beheaded; and will never set their feet on that on which Dagon lost his head; shaming those who tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and trample on things truly sacred. Yet this piece of superstition would help to perpetuate the remembrance of Dagon's disgrace, for with the custom the reason would be transmitted to posterity, and the children that should be born, enquiring why the threshold of Dagon's temple must not be trodden on, would be told, that Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord: Thus God would have honour, even out of their superstition. We are not told, that they repaired the broken image, it is likely they got the ark of God away first, and then they patched it up again, and set it in its place; for it seems, they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, *Is there not a lie in our right hand?* *Isa. xlv. 20.*

6. But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. 7.* And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God. 8. They sent therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither. 9. And it was so, that after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. 10. Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron: and it came to pass as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. 11. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his

own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12. And the men that died not, were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The downfall of Dagon, if the people had made a good use of it, and had been brought by it to repent of their idolatries, and to humble themselves before the God of Israel, and seek his face; that might have prevented the vengeance which God here proceeds to take upon them for the indignities done to his ark, and their obstinate adherence to their Idol, in defiance of the plainest conviction: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see, Isaiah xxvi. 11.* And if they will not see the glory, they shall feel the weight of God's hand, for so the Philistines did; *The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, ver. 6.* and he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence.

1. He destroyed them, viz. cut many of them off by sudden death, those, we may suppose, that had most triumphed in the captivity of the ark. This is distinguished from the disease with which others were smitten. At Gath it is called, *a great destruction, ver. 9. a deadly destruction, ver. 11.* And it is expressly said, *ver. 12.* those that were smitten with the emerods were the men that died not by the other destruction, which probably was the pestilence. They boasted of the great slaughter which their sword had made among the Israelites, *chap. iv. 10.* But God lets them know, that though he doth not see fit to draw Israel's sword against them, they were unworthy to be employed, yet God had a sword of his own, with which he could make a no less dreadful execution among them, which, if he whet, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, *Deut. xxxii. 41, 42.* Note, Those that contend with God, his ark and his Israel will infallibly be ruined by it at last. If conviction conquer not, destruction shall.

2. Those that were not destroyed he smote with emerods, *ver. 6.* in their secret parts, *ver. 9.* so grievous that, *ver. 12.* the cry went up to heaven, i. e. it might be heard a great way off, and perhaps, in the extremity of their pain and misery they cried, not to Dagon, but to the God of heaven. The Psalmist speaking of this sore judgment upon the Philistines, describes it thus, that God smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach, *Psal. lxxviii. 66.* The emerods (which we call the piles, and, perhaps, was then a more grievous disease than it is now) is threatened among the judgments that would be the fruit of the curse, *Deut. xxviii. 27.* It was both a painful and shameful disease: a vile disease for vile deserts: by it God would humble their pride, and put contempt upon them, as they had done upon his ark. The disease was epidemical, and, perhaps, among them, a new disease: *Ashdod was smitten, and the coasts thereof,* the country round. For contempt of God's ordinances, *many are weak and sick, and many sleep, 1 Cor. xi. 30.*

3. The men of Ashdod were soon aware, that it was the hand of God, the God of Israel, *ver. 7.* So were they constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon, nor submit to him; but rather, now he touch'd their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face; and, instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarens, who, when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to depart out of their coasts. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them, than enter into covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend: Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, *The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us.*

4. It is resolved to change the place of its imprisonment. A great council was called, and the question proposed to all the lords was, What shall we do with the ark? And at last it was agreed, That it should be carried to Gath, *ver. 8.* Some superstitious conceit they had, that the fault was in the place, and that the ark would be better pleased with another lodging, further off from Dagon's temple; and therefore, instead of returning it, as they should have done, to its own place, they contrive to send it to another place; Gath is pitched upon, a place famed for a race of giants, but their strength and stature are no fence against the pestilence and the emerods, the men of that city were smitten, *both small and great, ver. 9.* both dwarfs and giants, all alike to God's judgments; none so great as to over-top them, none so small to be over-look'd by them.

5. They were all at last sick of the ark, and very willing to be rid of it. It was sent from Gath to Ekron, and, coming by order of council, the Ekronites could not refuse it, but were much exasperated against their great men, for sending them such a fatal present, *ver. 10.* *They have sent it to us to slay us, and our people.* The ark had the tables of the law in it; and nothing more welcome to faithful Israelites than the word of God, to them it is a *savour of life unto life*; but to uncircumcised Philistines, that persist in enmity to God, nothing more dreadful nor unwelcome; to them it is a *savour of death unto death.* A general assembly is instantly called, to advise about sending the ark again to its own place, *ver. 11.* While they are consulting about it, the hand of God is doing execution; and their

contrivances to evade the judgment, do but spread it; many drop down dead among them, many more are raging ill of the emerods, *ver. 12.* What shall they do? Their triumphs in the captivity of the ark are soon turned into lamentations, and they are as fond to quit it, as ever they had been to seize it. Note, God can easily make Jerusalem a burthensome stone to all that heave at it, *Zech. xii. 3.* Those that fight against God will soon have enough of it, and first or last will be made to know, that none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. The wealth that is got by fraud and injustice, especially that is got by sacrilege and robbing God, though swallowed greedily and rolled under the tongue, as a sweet morsel must be vomited up again; for till it be, the sinner shall not feel *quietness in his belly, Job xx. 15. — 20.*

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have the return of the ark to the land of Israel, whither we are now gladly to attend it, and observe, (1.) How the Philistines dismissed it by the advice of their priests, ver. 1, — 11. With rich presents to the God of Israel, to make an atonement for their sin, ver. 3, 4, 5. and yet with a project to bring it back, unless providence directed the kine, contrary to their inclination, to the land of Israel, ver. 8, 9. (2.) How the Israelites entertained it. 1. With great joy and sacrifices of praise, ver. 12, — 18. 2. With an over-bold curiosity to look into it, for which many of them were struck dead, the terror of which moved them to send it forward to another city, ver. 19, — 21.

1. **A**ND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. 3. And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass-offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you, why his hand is not removed from you. 4. Then said they, What shall be the trespass-offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords. 5. Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land, and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. 6. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 7. Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch-kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart; and bring their calves home from them: 8. And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart, and put jewels of gold which ye return him for a trespass-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof, and send it away, that it may go. 9. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that hapned to us.

The first words of the chapter tell us, how long the captivity of the ark continued, it was in the country of the Philistines seven months. In the field of the Philistines; so it is in the original; from which some gather, that they having tried it in all their cities, and found it a plague to the inhabitants of each, at length they sent it into the open fields, upon which mice sprung up out of the ground in great multitudes, and destroyed the corn which was now near ripe, and marred the land. With that judgment they were plagued, *ver. 5.* and yet it is not mentioned in the foregoing chapter; so God let them know, that wherever they carried the ark, so long as they carried it captive, they should find it a curse to them. *Curseth shalt thou be in the city, and cursed in the field, Deut. xxviii. 16.* But most take it to signify, as we render it, *The country of the Philistines.* Now, (1.) Seven months Israel was punished with the absence of the ark, that special token of God's presence. How bare did the tabernacle look without it! How was the holy city now a desolation, and the holy land a wilderness! A melancholy time, no doubt it was, to the good people among them, particularly to Samuel; but they had this to comfort themselves with, as we have in the like distress, when we are deprived of the comfort of public ordinances, that wherever the ark is, *the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven,* and, by faith and prayer, we may have access with boldness to him there. We may have God nigh unto us, when the ark is at a distance. (2.) Seven months the Philistines were punished with the presence of the ark; so long it

was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Note, Sinners lengthen out their own miseries, by their obstinate refusing to part with their sins. Egypt's plagues had been fewer than ten, if Pharaoh's heart had not been hardened not to let the people go.

But at length it is determined, the ark must be sent back, there is no remedy, they are undone if they detain it.

1. The priests and the diviners are consulted about it, *ver. 2.* They were supposed to be best acquainted both with the rules of wisdom, and with the rites of worship and atonement. And the Israelites being their neighbours, and famed above all people for the institutions of their religion; they had, no doubt, the curiosity to acquaint themselves with their laws and usages, and therefore it was proper to ask them, *What shall we do to the ark of Jehovah?* All nations have had a regard to their priests, as the men whose lips keep knowledge. Had the Philistines diviners? we have divines, of whom we should enquire, wherewith we shall come before the Lord, and bow our selves before the most high God.

2. They give their advice very fully, and seem to be very unanimous in it. It was wonder, they did not, as friends to their country, give it, *ex officio,* before they were asked.

1. They urge it upon them, that it was absolutely necessary to send the ark back, from the example of Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, *ver. 6.* Some, it may be, were lothe to yield, and were willing to try it out with the ark a while longer, and to them they apply themselves; *Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did?* It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This good use we should make of the remaining records of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned, not to harden our hearts, as they did. It is much cheaper learning by other people's experience, than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go, therefore let the Philistines yield in time, to let the ark go.

2. They advise, that when they sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, *ver. 3.* Whatever the gods of other nations were, they knew the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly he resented the affront of holding his ark captive, they, with whom he had such a quarrel, must in any wise return him a trespass-offering; and they could not expect to be healed upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction; so far natural light instructed men; but when they began to contrive what that satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those who by wilful sin have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, as the Philistines did the ark, *Rom. i. 18.* may conclude, that there is no making their peace with him whom they have thus injured, but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin.

3. They direct, that this trespass-offering should be an acknowledgment of the punishment of their iniquity; by which they might take shame to themselves as conquered and yielding, and guilty before God, and might give glory to the God of Israel, as their mighty conqueror and most just avenger, *ver. 5.* They must make images of the emerods, i. e. of the swellings and sores in their secret parts, with which they had been afflicted; so making the reproach of that shameful disease perpetual by their own act and deed, *Psal. lxxviii. 66.* also images of the mice that had marred the land, owning thereby the almighty power of the God of Israel, who could chastise and humble them, even in the day of their triumph, by such small and despicable animals: These images must be made of gold, the most precious metal, to intimate, that they would gladly purchase their peace with the God of Israel at any rate, and would not think it bought too dear with gold, *with much fine gold.* The golden emerods must be in number five, according to the number of the lords, who, it is likely, were all afflicted with them, and were content thus to own it; it was advised, that the golden mice should be five too, but because the whole country was infested with them, it should seem, upon second thoughts, they sent more of them, according to the number both of the fenced cities and of country villages, *v. 18.* Their priests mind them, that one plague was on them all, they could not blame one another, for they were all guilty, which they were plainly told, by being all plagued. Their proposal to offer a trespass-offering for their offence, was conformable enough to divine revelation at that time; but to send such things as these for trespass-offerings was very foreign, and shewed them grossly ignorant of the methods of reconciliation appointed by the law of Moses; for there it appears all along, that it is blood, and not gold, that makes atonement for the soul.

4. They encourage them to hope, that hereby they would take an effectual course to get rid of the plague, *ye shall be healed, ver. 3.* For it seems the disease was obstinate to all the methods of cure their physicians had prescribed, let them therefore send back the ark, and then, say they, *It shall be known to you, why his hand is not removed from you,* i. e. by this it will appear, whether it is for your detaining the ark that you are thus plagued, for if it be, upon your delivering of it up the plague will cease. God has sometimes put his people upon making such a trial, whether their reformation would not be their relief, *Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, Mal. iii. 10.* Hag. ii. 19. Yet they speak doubtfully, *ver. 5.* Peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you; as if now they began to think,

think, that the judgment might come from God's hand, and yet not be removed, immediately upon the restitution of the ark; however, that was the likeliest way to obtain mercy. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

5. Yet they put them in a way to make a further trial, whether it was the hand of the God of Israel, that had smitten them with these plagues, or no. They must, in honour of the ark, put it on a new cart or carriage, to be drawn by two milch cows, that had calves daily sucking of them, *ver. 7.* unused to draw, and inclined to home; both for the sake of the crib where they were fed, and of the calves they fed, and, besides, altogether unacquainted with the road that led towards the land of Israel; they must have no one to lead or drive them, but must take their own way, which, in all reason, one might expect, would be home again; and yet, unless the God of Israel, after all the other miracles he has wrought, will work one more, and, by an invisible power, lead these cows, contrary to their natural instinct and inclination, to the land of Israel, and particularly to Beth-shemesh, they will retract their former opinion, and will believe it was not the hand of God that smote them, but it was a chance that *happened to them*, *ver. 8, 9.* Thus did God suffer himself to be tempted, and prescribed to, after he had been otherwise affronted, by these uncircumcised Philistines. Would they have been content, that the honour of Dagon, their god, should have been put upon such an issue as this? See how willing bad men are to shift off their convictions of the hand of God upon them, and to believe, when they are in trouble, it is *a chance that happens to them*; and if so, the rod has no voice, which they are concerned to hear or heed.

10. And the men did so: and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: 11. And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold, and the images of their emerods. 12. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the high-way, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them, unto the border of Beth-shemesh. 13. And *they of Beth-shemesh were* reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. 14. And the cart came into the field of Joshua a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the LORD. 15. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. 16. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day. 17. And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass-offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one. 18. And the golden mice *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines, *belonging to* the five lords, *both of* fenced cities, and of country-villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: *which stone remaineth* unto this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

We are here told,

1. How the Philistines dismissed the ark, *ver. 10, 11.* they were made as glad to part with it, as ever they had been to take it; as God had fetched Israel out of the house of bondage, so now the ark out of its captivity, in such a manner, as that *Egypt was glad, when they departed*, Psalm cv. 38. (1.) They received no money or price for the ransom of it, as they hoped to have done, even beyond a king's ransom. Thus it is prophesied of Cyrus, *Isa. xlv. 13. He shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward.* Nay, (2.) They gave jewels of gold, as the Egyptians did to the Israelites, to be rid of it. Thus the ark that was carried into the land of the Philistines a trophy of their victory, carried back with it trophies of its own, and lasting monuments of the disgrace of the Philistines. Note, God will be no loser in his glory at last, by the successes of the church's enemies against his ark, but will get him honour from those that seek to do dishonour to him.

2. How the kine brought it to the land of Israel, *ver. 12.* They *took the straight way to Beth-shemesh*, the next city of the land of Israel, and a priest's city, *and turned not aside.* This was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute creatures, and, all things considered, no less than a miracle. That cattle unaccustomed to the yoke should draw so even, so orderly, and still go onward; that, without any driver, they should go from home, to

which all tame creatures have a natural inclination, and from their own calves, to which they had a natural affection; that, without any director, they should go the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city eight or ten miles off, never missed the way, never turned aside into the fields to feed themselves, nor turned back home to feed their calves; they went on lowing for their young ones, by which it appeared they had not forgot them, but that nature was sensible of the grievance of going from them, the power of the God of nature therefore appeared so much the greater, in over-ruling one of the strongest instincts of nature. These two kine, saith Dr. Lightfoot, knew their owner, their great owner, *Isa. i. 3.* whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not; to which I may add, they brought home the ark, to shame the stupidity of Israel, that made no attempt to fetch it home. God's providence is conversant about the motions even of brute creatures, and serves its own purposes by them. The lords of the Philistines, with a suitable retinue, no doubt, went after them, wondering at the power of the God of Israel; and thus they, who thought to triumph over the ark, were made to lacquey it after the ark.

3. How it was welcomed to the land of Israel. *The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest*, *ver. 13.* They were going on with their worldly business, and were in no care about the ark, made no enquiries what was become of it; if they had, it is likely they might have had private intelligence beforehand of its coming, and might have gone to meet it, and conduct it into their own border. But they were as careless as the people that *cieled their own houses*, and let God's house lie waste. Note, God will, in his own time, effect the deliverance of his church, not only, though it be fought against by its enemies, but though it be neglected by its friends. Some observe, that the returning ark found the men of Beth-shemesh, not idling or sporting in the streets of the city, but busy, reaping the corn in the fields, and well employed: Thus the tidings of the birth of Christ, were brought to the shepherds, when they were *keeping their flock by night*. The devil visits idle men with his temptations, God visits industrious men with his favours.

The same invisible hand that directed the kine to the land of Israel, brought them into the field of Joshua, and in that field they stood; some think for the owner's sake, on whom, being a very good man, they suppose God designed to put this honour. I rather think, it was for the sake of the great stone in that field, which was convenient to put the ark upon, and which is spoken of, *ver. 14, 15, 18.*

Now, 1. When the reapers *saw the ark, they rejoiced*, *ver. 13.* their joy for that was greater than the joy of harvest, and therefore they left their work to bid it welcome. When the Lord turned again the captivity of his ark, they were *like men that dream, then was their mouth filled with laughter*, Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2. Though they had not zeal and courage enough to attempt the rescue or ransom of it, yet, when it did come, they bid it heartily welcome. Note, The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, cannot but be matter of great joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. They offered up the kine for a burnt-offering, to the honour of God, and made use of the wood of the cart for fuel, *ver. 14.* probably, the Philistines intended these, when they sent them, to be a part of their trespass-offering, to make atonement, *ver. 3, 7.* However, the men of Beth-shemesh looked upon it as proper to make this use of them, because it was by no means fit that ever they should be put to any other use; never shall that cart carry any common thing, that has once carried that sacred symbol of the divine presence: and the kine had been under such an immediate conduct of heaven, that God had, as it were, already laid claim to them; they were servants to him, and therefore must be sacrifices to him; and, no doubt, were accepted, though females, whereas, in strictness, every burnt-offering was to be a male.

3. They deposited the ark, with the chest of jewels that the Philistines presented, upon the great stone, in the open field; a cold lodging for the ark of the Lord, and a very mean one; yet better so than in Dagon's temple, or in the hands of the Philistines. It is desirable to see the ark in its habitation, in all the circumstances of solemnity and splendor, but better have it upon a great stone, and in the fields of the wood, than be without it. The intrinsic grandure of instituted ordinances, ought not to be diminished in our eyes, by the meanness and poverty of the place where they are administered. As the burning of the cart and cows, that brought home the ark, might be construed to signify their hopes, that it should never be carried away again out of the land of Israel, so the setting it upon a great stone, might signify their hopes, that it should be established again upon a firm foundation. The church is built upon a rock.

4. They offered the sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, some think, upon the great stone, more probably, upon an altar of earth made for the purpose, *ver. 15.* and the case being extraordinary, the law for offering at the altar in the court of the tabernacle was dispensed with, and the easier, because Shiloh was now dismantled, God himself had forsaken it, and the ark, which was its chief glory, they had with them here. Beth-shemesh, though it lay within the lot of the tribe of Dan, yet belonged to Judah, so that this accidental bringing of the ark hither, was an indication of its designed settlement there, in process of time, for when God *refused the taber-*

tabernacle of Joseph, he chose the tribe of Judah, Psal. lxxviii. 67, 68. It was one of those cities which was assigned out of the lot of Judah to the sons of Aaron, Josh. xxi. 16. Whither should the ark go, but to a priest's city? and it was well they had those of that sacred order ready, (for though they are here called Levites, ver. 15. yet it should seem they were priests) both to take down the ark, and to offer the sacrifices.

5. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, much affected, we may suppose, with what they had seen of the glory of God, and the zeal of the Israelites, and yet not reclaimed from the worship of Dagon; for how seldom *has a nation changed their gods, though they were no gods?* Jer. ii. 11. Though they cannot but think the God of Israel *glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises*, yet they are resolved they will think Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, at least as good as he, and to him they will cleave however, because he is theirs.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the continuance of the great stone in the same place, there it is *unto this day*, ver. 18. because it remained a lasting memorial of this great event, and served to support the traditional history, by which it was transmitted to posterity. The fathers would tell it the children, this is the stone upon which the ark of God was set, when it came out of the Philistines hands; a thing never to be forgotten.

19. ¶ And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? 21. ¶ And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

Here is, 1. The sin of the men of Beth-shemesh. *They looked into the ark of the Lord*, ver. 19. Every Israelite had heard great talk of the ark, and had been possessed with a mighty veneration for it, but they had been told, that it was lodged within a veil, and even the high priest himself might not look upon it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense: Perhaps, this made many say (as we are apt to covet that which is forbidden) what a great deal they would give for a sight of it. Some of these Beth-shemites, we may suppose, for that reason, *rejoiced to see the ark*, ver. 13. more than for the sake of the publick. Yet this did not content them, they might see it, but they would go further, they would take off the covering, which, it is likely, was nailed or screwed on, and look into it; under pretence of seeing whether the Philistines had not taken the two tables out of it, or some way damaged them; but really to gratify a sinful curiosity of their own, which intruded into those things that God had thought fit to conceal from them. Note, It is a great affront to God for vain men to pry into, and meddle with, the secret things which belong not to them, Deut. xxix. 29. Col. ii. 18. We were all ruined by an ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin, was that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark: The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion bred contempt and irreverence. Perhaps, they presumed upon their being priests, but the dignity of the ministerial office will be so far from excusing, that it will aggravate a careless and irreverent treatment of holy things. They should, by their example, have taught others to keep their distance, and look upon the ark with a holy awe. Perhaps, they presumed upon the kind entertainment they had given the ark, and the sacrifices they had now offered to welcome it home with, for this they thought the ark was indebted to them, and they might be allowed to repay themselves with the satisfaction of looking into it: But let no man think that his service done for God will justify him in any instance of disrespect or irreverence towards the things of God. Or, It may be they presumed upon the present mean circumstances the ark was in, newly come out of captivity and unsettled; now it stood upon a cold stone they thought they might make bold with it; they should never have such another opportunity of being familiar with it. It is an offence to God, if we think meanly of his ordinances, because of the meanness of the manner of their administration. Had they looked with an understanding eye upon the ark, and not judged purely by outward appearance, they would have thought the ark never shone with greater majesty than it did now; it had triumphed over the Philistines, come out of its house of bondage, (like Christ out of the grave) by its own power; had they considered this; they would not have looked into it thus, as a common chest.

2. Their punishment for this sin. *He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, many of them, with a great slaughter*. How jealous is God for the honour of his ark? he will not suffer it to be profaned; *he not deceived, God is not mocked*. They that will not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice, and sink under the tokens of his displeasure. They that pry into what is forbidden, and come too near to holy fire,

will find it is at their peril. *He smote fifty thousand and seventy men*. This account of the numbers smitten, is expressed in a very unusual manner, in the original, which, besides the improbability, that there should be so many guilty, and so many slain, occasions many learned men to question, whether we take the matter right. In the original it is, *He smote in (or among) the people, threescore and ten men; fifty thousand men*. The Syriac and Arabick read it, five thousand and seventy men. The Chaldee reads it, seventy men of the elders, and fifty thousand of the common people. Seventy men as valuable as fifty thousand, so some, because they were priests. Some think the seventy men were the Beth-shemites that were slain for looking into the ark, and the fifty thousand were those that were slain by the ark, in the land of the Philistines. *He smote seventy men*, that is, *fifty out of a thousand*; which was one in twenty, a half decimation; so some understand it. The Septuagint read it much as we do, he smote seventy men, and fifty thousand men. Josephus saith, only seventy were smitten.

3. The terror that was struck upon the men of Beth-shemesh, by this severe stroke. They said, as well they might, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* ver. 20. Some think, it speaks their murmuring against God, as if he had dealt hardly and unjustly with them. Instead of quarrelling with themselves, and their own sins, they quarrelled with God and his judgments; as *David was displeased*, in a case not much unlike, 2 Sam. vi. 8, 9. I rather think, it speaks their awful and reverent adoration of God, as the Lord God, as a holy Lord God, and as a God before whom none is able to stand. Thus they infer from that tremendous judgment, *Who is able to stand before the God of the ark?* To stand before God to worship him, blessed be his name, is not impossible, we are, through Christ, invited, encouraged, and enabled, to do it, but to stand before God, to contend with him, we are not able. Who is able to stand before the throne of his immediate glory, and look full upon it? 1 Tim. vi. 16. Who is able to stand before the tribunal of his inflexible justice, and make his part good there? Psal. cxxx. 3. cxliii. 2. Who is able to stand before the arm of his provoked power, and either resist or bear the strokes of it? Psal. lxxvi. 7.

4. Their desire hereupon to be rid of the ark, they asked, *To whom shall he go up from us*, ver. 20. They should rather have asked, how may we make our peace with him, and recover his favour? Mic. vi. 6, 7. but they begin to be as weary of the ark, as the Philistines had been, whereas if they had treated it with due reverence, who knows, but it might have taken up its residence among them, and they had all been blessed for the ark's sake? But thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners consciences, they, instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put that from them, Jer. vi. 10. They sent messengers to the elders of Kirjath-jearim, a strong city, further up in the country, and begged of them to come and fetch the ark up thither, ver. 21. They durst not touch it to bring it thither themselves, but stood aloof from it as a dangerous thing: Thus do foolish men run from one extrem to the other, from presumptuous boldness to slavish shiness. Kirjath-jearim, i. e. the city of woods, belonged to Judah, Josh. xv. 9. 60. it lay in the way from Beth-shemesh to Shiloh, so that when they sent to them to fetch it, we may suppose, they intended that from thence the elders of Shiloh should fetch it, but God intended otherwise. Thus was it sent from town to town, and no care taken of it by the publick; a sign there was no king in Israel.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *The eclipsing of the glory of the ark, by its privacy in Kirjath-jearim for many years*, ver. 1, 2. (2.) *The appearing of the glory of Samuel, in his publick services for the good of Israel, to whom he was raised up to be a judge, and he was the last that bore that character*. This chapter gives us all the account we have of him, when he was in the prime of his time; for what we had before, was in his childhood, chap. ii. and iii. what we have of him after, was in his old age, chap. viii. 1. We have him here active, (1.) *In the reformation of Israel from their idolatry*, ver. 3, 4. (2.) *In the reviving of religion among them*, ver. 5, 6. (3.) *In praying for them against the invading Philistines*, ver. 7, 8, 9. *over whom, God, in answer to his prayer, gave them a glorious victory*, ver. 10, 11. (4.) *In erecting a thankful memorial of that victory*, ver. 12. (5.) *In the improvement of that victory*, ver. 13, 14. (6.) *In the administration of justice*, ver. 15—17. *And these were the things for which God was preparing and designing him, in the early vouchsafements of his grace to him*.

1. **A**ND the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son, to keep the ark of the LORD. 2. And it came to pass while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Here

Here we must attend the ark to Kirjath-jearim, and then leave it there, to hear not a word more of it, till David fetched it thence, above forty years after, 1 Sam. xiv. 18. except once.

1. We are very willing to attend it thither, for the men of Beth-shemesh have by their own folly made it a burthen, which might have been a blessing; and gladly would we see it among those, to whom it will be a *savour of life unto life*, for in every place where it has been of late, it has been a *savour of death unto death*.

Now, (1.) The men of Kirjath-jearim cheerfully bring it among them, *ver. 1. They came*, at the first word, *and fetched up the ark of the Lord*. Their neighbours, the Beth-shemites, were not so glad to be rid of it, but they were as glad to receive it, knowing very well that what slaughter the ark had made at Beth-shemesh, was not an act of arbitrary power, but necessary justice, and they that suffered by it, must blame themselves, not the ark; we may depend upon the word which God hath said, *Jer. xxv. 6. Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*. Note, The judgments of God on those who profane his ordinances, should make us not afraid of the ordinances, but of profaning them, and making an ill use of them.

(1.) They carefully provide for its decent entertainment among them, as a welcome guest, with true affection, and as an honourable guest, with respect and reverence. (1.) They provide a proper place to receive it. They had no publick building to adorn with it, but they lodged it in the house of Abinadab, which stood upon the highest ground, and probably, was the best house in their city; or, perhaps, the master of it was the most eminent man they had for piety, and best affected to the ark. The men of Beth-shemesh left it exposed upon a stone in the open field, and though it was a city of priests, none of them received it into his house; but the men of Kirjath-jearim, though common Israelites, gave it house-room, and, no doubt, the best furnished room in the house, to which it was brought. Note, 1. God will find out a resting-place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, yet the hearts of others shall be inclined to receive it. 2. It is no new thing for God's ark to be thrust into a private house. Christ, and his apostles, preached from house to house, when they could not have publick places at command. 3. Sometimes priests are ashamed and outdone in religion by common Israelites. (2.) They provided a proper person to attend it. *They sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it*; not the father, either because he was aged and infirm, or because he had the affairs of his house and family to attend, from which they would not take him off. But the son, who, it is probable, was a very pious devout young man, and zealously affected towards the best things; his business was to keep the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched or looked into by too curious Israelites. He was to keep the room clean and decent in which the ark was, that, though it was in an obscure place, it might not look like a neglected thing, which no man looked after. It doth not appear, that this Eleazar was of the tribe of Levi, much less of the house of Aaron, nor was it needful that he should, for here was no altar either for sacrifice or incense, only we may suppose, that some devout Israelites would come and pray before the ark, and those that did so he was there ready to attend and assist. For this purpose they sanctified him, *i. e.* by his own consent, they obliged him to make this his business, and to give a constant attendance to it; they set him apart for it in the name of all their citizens. This was irregular, but it was dispensed with, by reason of the present distress. When the ark is but newly come out of captivity, we cannot expect it to be of a sudden in its usual solemnity, but must take things as they are, and make the best of them.

2. Yet we are very loth to leave it here, wishing it well at Shiloh again, but that is made desolate, *Jer. vii. 14.* however, wishing it at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle and the altars are; but it seems it must lie by the way, for want of some publick spirited men, to bring it to its proper place.

1. The time of its continuance here, was long, very long, above forty years it lay in these fields of the wood, a remote obscure private place, unfrequented, and almost unregarded, *ver. 2. The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long*, even till David fetched it thence. It was very strange, that, of all the time that Samuel governed, the ark was never brought to its place, in the holy of holies, an evidence of the decay of holy zeal among them. God suffered it to be so, to punish them for their neglect of the ark when it was in its place; and to shew the mighty stress which the institution laid upon the ark, was but typical of Christ, and those good things to come, which cannot be moved, *Heb. ix. 23. xii. 27.* It was a just reproach to the priests, that not one of their order was sanctified to keep the ark.

2. Twenty years of this time were passed, before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint read it, somewhat more clearly than we do; *and it was twenty years, and (i. e. when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord*. So long the ark remained in obscurity, and the Israelites were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made any enquiry after it, what was become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God's special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement, as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily can formal professors rest satisfied in a road of external performances, without

any tokens of God's presence or acceptance. But at length they bethought themselves, and began to lament after the Lord, stirred up to it, it is probable, by the preaching of Samuel, with which an extraordinary working of the Spirit of God set in. A general disposition to repentance and reformation now appears throughout all Israel, and they begin to *look unto him whom they had slighted, and to mourn*, *Zech. xii. 10.* Dr. Lightfoot thinks, this was a matter and time as remarkable as almost any we read of in scripture; and that that great conversion, *Acts ii. and iii.* is the only parallel to it. Note, 1. Those that know how to value God's ordinances, cannot but reckon it a very lamentable thing to want them. 2. True repentance and conversion begins in lamenting after the Lord; we must be sensible, that by sin we have provoked him to withdraw, and are undone if we continue in a state of distance from him, and be restless till we have recovered his favour, and obtained his gracious returns. It was better with Israelites, when they wanted the ark, and were lamenting after it, than when they had the ark, and were prying into it, and priding themselves in it. Better see people longing in the scarcity of the means of grace, than loathing in the abundance of them.

3. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. 4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. 5. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. 6. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

We may well wonder where Samuel was, and what he was doing all this while, for we have not had him so much as named till now, since *chap. iv. 1.* not as if he were unconcerned, but his labours among his people are not mentioned, till there appear the fruit of them. When he perceived that they began to *lament after the Lord*, he struck while the iron was hot, and two things he endeavoured to do for them, as a faithful servant of God, and a faithful friend to the Israel of God.

1. He endeavoured to separate between them and their idols, for there reformation must begin. He *spoke to all the house of Israel*, *ver. 3.* going, as it should seem, from place to place, an itinerant preacher: (for we find not that they were gathered together till *ver. 5.*) and wherever he came this was his exhortation, *If ye do indeed return to the Lord*, as you seem inclined to do, by your lamentations for your departure from him, and his from you. Then know, (1.) That you must renounce and abandon your idols, *put away the strange gods*, for your God will admit no rival; put them away from you, each one from himself, nay, and put them *from among you*, do what you can, in your places, to rid them out of the country. Put away Baalim, the strange gods, and Ashtaroth the strange goddesses, for they had of them too. Or, Ashtaroth is particularly named, because it was the best beloved idol, and that which they were most wedded to. Note, True repentance strikes at the darling sin, and will, with a peculiar zeal and resolution, put away that; the sin which most *easily besets us*. (2.) That you must make a solemn business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration, and a steadfast resolution, for both are included in *preparing the heart*, directing, disposing, establishing the heart unto the Lord. (3.) That you must be intire for God, for him and no other, *serve him only*, else you do not serve him at all, so as to please him. (4.) That this is the only way, and a sure way to prosperity and deliverance. Take this course, and *he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines*; for it was, because you forsook him and served other gods, that he delivered you into their hands. This was the purport of Samuel's preaching, and it had a wonderful good effect; *ver. 4. They put away Baalim and Ashtaroth*, not only quitted the worship of them, but destroyed their images, demolished their altars, and quite abandoned them; *What have we to do any more with idols?* *Hos. xiv. 8. Isa. xxx. 22.*

2. He endeavoured to engage them for ever to God and his service. Now he had them in a good mind, he did all he could to keep them in it.

1. He summons all Israel, at least by their elders, as their representatives, to meet him at Mizpeh, *ver. 5.* and there he promised to pray for them. And it was worth while for them to come from the remotest part of the country, to join with Samuel in seeking God's favour. Note, Ministers should pray for those to whom they preach, that God by his grace would make the preaching effectual. And when we come together in religious assemblies, we must remember, that it is as much our business there, to join in publick prayers, as it is to hear a sermon. He would pray for them, that by the grace of God they might be parted from their idols, and that

then, by the providence of God, they might be delivered from the Philistines. Ministers would profit their people more, if they did but pray more for them.

2. They obey his summons, and not only come to the meeting, but conform to the intentions of it, and appear [there very well disposed, *ver. 6.* (1.) *They drew water and poured it out before the Lord:* signifying, 1. Their humiliation and contrition for sin; owning themselves as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, 2 *Sam. xiv. 14.* so mean, so miserable before God, *Psal. xxii. 14.* the Chaldee reads it, *they poured out their hearts in repentance before the Lord.* They wept rivers of tears, and sorrowed after a godly sort, for it was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. 2. Their earnest prayers and supplications to God for mercy. The soul is in prayer poured out before God, *Psal. lxii. 8.* 3. Their universal reformation; they thus expressed their willingness to part with all their sins, and to retain no more of the relish or favour of them than the vessel doth of the water that is poured out of it. They were free and full in their confession, and fixed in their resolution to cast away from them *all their transgressions.* Israel is now *baptized from their idols:* So Dr. Lightfoot. 4. Some think it signifies their joy in the hope of God's mercy, which Samuel had assured them of. This ceremony was used with that signification at the feast of tabernacles, *John vii. 37, 38.* and see *Isa. xii. 3.* Taking it in this sense, it must be read, *they drew water after they they had fasted.* In the close of their humiliation they thus expressed their hope of pardon and reconciliation. (2.) *They fasted,* abstained from food, afflicted their souls, so expressing repentance and exciting devotion. (3.) They made a publick confession, *we have sinned against the Lord,* so giving glory to God, and taking shame to themselves. And if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our God *faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

3. Samuel judged them at that time in Mizpeh, *i. e.* He assured them, in God's name, of the pardon of their sins upon their repentance, and that God was reconciled to them. It was a judgment of absolution. Or, He received informations against those that did not leave their idols, and proceeded against them according to law. Those that would not judge themselves he judged. Or, Now he settled courts of justice among them, and appointed the terms and circuits which he observed afterwards, *ver. 16.* Now he set those wheels a going; and whereas before he acted only as a prophet, now he began to act as a magistrate; to prevent their relapsing to those sins which now they seemed to have renounced.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel: and when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9. ¶ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the LORD; and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel, and the LORD heard him. 10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundred with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. 11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. 12. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Here, 1. The Philistines invade Israel, *ver. 7.* taking umbrage from that general meeting for repentance and prayer, as if it had been a rendezvous for war, and if so, they thought it prudence to keep the war out of their own country. They had no just cause for this suspicion; but those that seek to do mischief to others, will be forward to imagine that others design mischief to them. Now see here, (1.) How evil sometimes seems to come out of good. The religious meeting of the Israelites at Mizpeh, brought trouble upon them from the Philistines, which, perhaps, tempted them to wish they had staid at home, and to blame Samuel for calling them together. But we may be in God's way and yet meet with distress: nay, when sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments on work to the utmost, to oppose and discourage them. But, (2.) How good is at length brought out of that evil. Israel could never be threatened more seasonably than at this time, when they were repenting and praying, nor could they have been better prepared to receive the enemy; nor could the Philistines have acted more impolitically for themselves, than to make war upon Israel at this time, when they were making their peace with God: but God permitted them to do it, that he might have an opportunity, immediately of crowning his peoples reformation with tokens of his favour, and of confirming the words of his messenger, who had

assured them, that, if they repented, God would *deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines.* Thus he makes man's wrath to praise him, and serves the purposes of his grace to his people, even by the malicious designs of their enemies against them, *Mic. iv. 11, 12.*

2. Israel sticks close to Samuel, as their best friend, under God, in this distress; though he was no military man, nor ever celebrated as a mighty man of valour; yet being afraid of the Philistines, for whom they thought themselves an unequal match, they engaged Samuel's prayers for them, *ver. 8.* *Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us.* They were here unarmed, unprepared for war, come together to fast and pray, not to fight; prayers and tears therefore being all the weapons many of them are now furnished with, to these they have recourse. And knowing Samuel to have a great interest in heaven, they earnestly beg of him to improve it for them. They had reason to expect it, because he had promised to *pray for them,* *ver. 5.* had promised them deliverance from the Philistines, *ver. 3.* and they had been observant of him, in all that which he had spoken to them from the Lord. Thus they who sincerely submit to Christ, as their lawgiver and judge, need not doubt of their interest in his intercession. They were very solicitous that Samuel should not cease to pray for them; what military preparations were to be made, they would undertake them, but let him continue instant in prayer, perhaps, remembering, that when Moses did but let down his hand never so little, Amalek prevailed. O what a comfort is it to all believers, that our great intercessor above, never ceaseth, is never silent, for he *always appears in the presence of God for us!*

3. Samuel intercedes with God for them, and doth it *by sacrifice,* *ver. 9.* He took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a *burnt-offering, a whole burnt-offering to the Lord,* and while the sacrifice was in burning, with the smoke of it, his prayers ascended up to heaven, for Israel. Observe, 1. He made intercession with a sacrifice. Christ intercedes in the virtue of his satisfaction, and in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great oblation, depending upon that for audience and acceptance. Samuel's sacrifice without his prayer had been an empty shadow, his prayer without the sacrifice had not been so prevalent, but both together teach us, what great things we may expect from God, in answer to those prayers which are made with faith in Christ's sacrifice. 2. It was a burnt-offering, which was offered purely for the glory of God, so intimating, that the great plea he relied on in this prayer, was taken from the honour of God. Lord, help thy people now for thy name's sake. When we endeavour to give glory to God, we may hope he will in answer to our prayers work for his own glory. 3. It was but one sucking lamb that he offered; for it is the integrity and intention of the heart that God looks at, more than the bulk or number of the offerings. This one lamb (typifying the Lamb of God) was more acceptable than thousands of rams or bullocks would have been, without faith and prayer. Samuel was no priest, but he was a Levite and a prophet, the case was extraordinary, and what he did was by special direction, and therefore was accepted of God. And justly was this reproach put upon the priests, because they had corrupted themselves.

4. God gave a gracious answer to Samuel's prayer, *ver. 9.* *The Lord heard him.* He was himself a Samuel, asked of God, and many a Samuel, many a mercy in answer to prayer God gave him. Sons of prayer should be famous for praying, as *Samuel was, among them that call upon his name,* *Psal. xcix. 6.* The answer was a real answer, the Philistines were discomfited, *ver. 10, 11.* totally routed, and that in such a manner as highly magnified the prayer of Samuel, the power of God, and the valour of Israel. (1.) The prayer of Samuel was honoured, for at the very time when he was offering up his sacrifice, and his prayer with it, the battle begun, and turned immediately against the Philistines. Thus *while he was yet speaking, God heard,* and answered *in thunder,* *Isa. lxv. 24.* God shewed, that it was Samuel's prayer and sacrifice that he had respect to, and hereby let Israel know, that as in a former engagement with the Philistines he had justly chastised their presumptuous confidence in the presence of the ark, on the shoulders of two profane priests, so now he graciously accepted their humble dependence upon the prayer of faith, from the mouth and heart of a pious prophet. (2.) The power of God was greatly honoured; for he took the work into his own hand, and discomfited them, not with great hail-stones, which would kill them, as *Josh. x. 11.* but with a great thunder which frightened them, and put them into such terror and consternation that they fainted away, and became a very easy prey to the sword of Israel, before whom, being thus confounded, they were smitten. Josephus adds, that the earth quaked under them, when first they made the onset, and, in many places, opened and swallowed them up; and that, besides the terror of the thunder, their faces and hands were burnt with lightning, which obliged them to shift for themselves by flight. And being thus driven to their heels by the immediate hand of God (whom they feared not so much as they had feared his ark, *chap. iv. 7.*) then, (3.) Honour was put upon the hosts of Israel, they were made use of for the completing of the victory, and had the pleasure of triumphing over their oppressors, *they pursued the Philistines, and smote them.* How soon did they find the benefit of their repentance, and reformation, and return to God! Now they have thus engaged him for them, none of their enemies can stand before them.

5. Samuel erected a thankful memorial of this victory, to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Israel, *ver. 12.* he set up an Eben-ezer, the stone of help. If ever the peoples hard hearts should lose the impressions of this providence, this stone would either revive the remembrance of it, and make them thankful, or remain a standing witness against them for their unthankfulness.

(1.) The place where this memorial was set up, was the same, where, twenty years before, the Israelites were smitten before the Philistines, for that was beside Eben-ezer, *chap. iv. 1.* The sin which procured that defeat formerly, being pardoned, upon their repentance, the pardon was sealed by this glorious victory in the very same place where they then suffered loss; see *Hof. i. 10.*

(2.) Samuel himself took care to set up this monument; he had been instrumental by prayer to obtain the mercy, and therefore he thought himself in a special manner obliged to make this grateful acknowledgment of it. (3.) The reason he gives for the name is, *hitherto the Lord hath helped us*: in which he speaks thankfully of what was passed, giving the glory of the victory to God only, who had added this to all his former favours; and yet he speaks somewhat doubtfully for the future: Hitherto things have done well, but what God may yet do with us we know not, that we refer to him; but let us praise him for what he has done. Note, The beginnings of mercy and deliverance, are to be acknowledged by us with thankfulness, so far as they go, though it be not completely finished, nay, though the issue seem uncertain. *Having obtained help from God, I continue hitherto*, saith blessed Paul, *Acts xxvi. 22.*

13. ¶ So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines, all the days of Samuel. 14. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath, and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines: and there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. 15. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. 17. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house: and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

We have here a short account of the further good services that Samuel did to Israel. Having parted them from their idols, and brought them home to their God, he had put them into a capacity of receiving further benefits by his ministry. Having prevailed in that, he becomes, in other instances, a great blessing to them; yet writing it himself, he is brief in the relation. We are not told here, but it appears, *2 Chron. xxxv. 18.* that in the days of Samuel the prophet, the people of Israel kept the ordinance of the passover with more than ordinary devotion, notwithstanding the distance of the ark, and the desolations of Shiloh. Many good offices, no doubt, he did for Israel, but here we are only told how instrumental he was.

1. In securing the publick peace, *ver. 13.* *In his days the Philistines came no more into the coast of Israel*, made no inroads or incursions upon them, perceiving that God now fought for Israel, and that his hand was against the Philistines; this kept them in awe, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Sampson, but by the power of prayer to God, and carrying on a work of reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.

2. In recovering the publick rights, *ver. 14.* By his influence, Israel had the courage to demand the cities which the Philistines had unjustly taken from them, and had long detained; and the Philistines, not daring to contend with one, that had so great an interest in heaven, tamely yielded to the demand, and restored (some think) even Ekron and Gath, two of their capital cities, though afterwards they retook them; others think, some small towns that lay from Ekron to Gath, which were forced out of the Philistines hands. This they got by their reformation and religion; they got ground of their enemies, and got forward in their affairs. It is added, *There was peace between Israel, and the Amorites*, i. e. the Canaanites, the remains of the natives. Not that Israel made any league with them, but they were quiet, and not so mischievous to Israel, as they had sometimes been. Thus *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*, and give him no disturbance, *Prov. xvi. 17.*

3. In administering publick justice, *ver. 15, 16.* *He judged Israel*; as a prophet, he taught them their duty, and reproved them for their sins, for that is called judging, *Ezek. xx. 4. xxii. 2.* Moses judged Israel, when he made them know the statutes of God, and his laws, *Exod. xviii. 16.* and thus Samuel judged them to the last, even after Saul was made king; so he promised them then, when Saul was inaugurated, *chap. xii. 23.* *I will not cease to teach you the good and the right way.* As a magistrate, he received

appeals from the inferior courts, and gave judgment upon them; tried causes, and determined them; tried prisoners, and acquitted or condemned them, according to the law. This he did all his days, till he grew old, and past service, and resigned to Saul; and afterwards he exercised authority, when application was made to him; nay, he judged even Agag, and Saul himself. But when he was in his prime, he rode the circuit, for the convenience of the country; at least, of that part of it, which lay most under his influence. He kept courts at Beth-el, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, all in the tribe of Benjamin; but his constant residence was at Ramah, his father's city, and there he judged Israel, thither they resorted to him from all parts with their complaints, *ver. 17.*

4. In keeping up the publick exercises of religion, for there where he lived, he built an altar to the Lord, not in contempt of the altar that was at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle was; but divine justice having laid Shiloh waste, and no other place being yet chosen, for them to bring their offerings to, *Deut. xii. 11.* he looked upon the law, which obliged them to one place, to be for the present suspended, and therefore being a prophet, and under divine direction, he did, as the patriarchs did, built an altar where he lived, both for the use of his own family, and for the good of the country that resorted to it. Great men should use their wealth, power and interest, for the keeping up of religion, in the places where they live.

C H A P. VIII.

Things went so very well with Israel, in the chapter before, under Samuel's administration, that, methinks, it is pity to find him so quickly, as we do in this chapter, old, and going off, and things working towards a revolution. But so it is; Israel's good days seldom continue long. We have here, (1.) Samuel decaying, ver. 1. (2.) His sons degenerating, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Israel discontented at the present government, and fond to see a change. For, 1. They petition Samuel to set a king over them, ver. 4, 5. 2. Samuel brings the matter to God, ver. 6. 3. God directs him what answer to give them, by way of reproof, ver. 7, 8. And by way of remonstrance, setting forth the consequences of a change of the government, and how uneasy they would soon be under it, ver. 9—18. 4. They insist upon their petition, ver. 19, 20. 5. Samuel promiset them, from God, that they shall shortly be gratified, ver. 21, 22. Thus hard is it for people to know when they are well.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2. Now the name of his first-born was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba. 3. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Two sad things we find here, but not strange things.

1. A good and useful man going old, and unfit for service, *ver. 1.* *Samuel was old*, and could not judge Israel as he had done. He is not reckoned to be past sixty years of age now, perhaps, not so much; but he was a man betimes, was full of thoughts and cares when he was a child, which, perhaps, hastened the infirmities of age upon him; the fruits that are first ripe keep the worst. He had spent his strength and spirits in the fatigue of publick business, and now, if he think to shake himself as at other times, he finds he is mistaken, old age has cut his hair. Those that are in the prime of their time, ought to be busy in doing the work of life; for as they go into years, they will find themselves less disposed to it, and less able for it.

2. The children of a good man going to naught, and not treading in his steps. Samuel had given his sons so good an education, and they had given him such good hopes of their doing well, and gained such a reputation in Israel, that he made them judges, assistants to him a while, and afterwards deputies under him at Beer-sheba, which lay remote from Ramah, *ver. 2.* Probably, the southern countries petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes: we have reason to think, Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons, he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, no more than Gideon; but because, for ought appeared yet, they were men very fit for the trust; and none so proper to ease the aged judge, and take some of the burthen off him, as (*cæteris paribus*) his own sons, who, no doubt, were respected for their good father's sake, and having such an advantage at setting out, might soon have been great, if they had been but good. But alas, his sons walked not in his ways, *ver. 3.* and when their character was the reverse of his, their relation to so good a man, which otherwise had been their honour, was really their disgrace. *Degeneranti Genus Opprobrium.* Note, Those that have the most grace themselves, cannot give grace to their children. It has oft been the grief of good men to see their posterity, instead of treading in their steps, trampling upon them, and, as Job speaks, *marring their path.* Nay, many that have begun well, promised fair, and set out in the right paths, so that their parents and friends have had great hopes of them, yet afterwards have turned aside to by-paths, and

and been the grief of those, whose joy they should have been. When Samuel's sons were made judges, and settled at a distance from him, then they discovered themselves. Thus, (1.) Many that have been well educated, and have carried themselves well while they were under their parents eye, when they have gone abroad into the world, and set up for themselves, have proved bad. Let none therefore be secure, either of themselves or theirs, but depend on divine grace. (2.) Many that have done well in a state of meanness and subjection, have been spoiled by preferment and power. Honours change mens minds, and too often for the worse. It doth not appear, that Samuel's sons were so profane and vicious as Eli's sons, but, whatever they were in other respects, they were corrupt judges, they *turned aside after lucre*, after the mammon of unrighteousness, so the Chaldee reads it. Note, *The love of money is the root of all evil*. It is pernicious in any, but especially in judges. Samuel had taken no bribes, chap. xii. 3. but his sons did, though, no doubt, he warned them against it; when he made them judges; and then they perverted judgment; in determining controversies, had an eye to the bribe, not to the law, and enquired who bid highest, not who had right on his side. It is sad with a people, when the publick justice, that should do them right, being perverted, doth them the greatest wrong.

4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. 5. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 6. ¶ But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us: and Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 7. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 8. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt even to this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods: so do they also unto thee. 9. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10. ¶ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people, that asked of him a king. 11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* shall run before his chariots. 12. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13. And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers. 14. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants. 15. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work. 17. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 19. ¶ Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us: 20. That we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. 22. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

We have here the starting of a matter perfectly new and surprising, which was the setting up of kingly government in Israel. Perhaps the thing had been oft talked of among them, by those that were given to change, and affected that which looked great. But we do not find, that it was ever till now publicly proposed and debated: Abimelech was little better than a titular king, tho' he be said to reign over Israel, Judges ix. 22. and, perhaps, his fall had, for a great while rendred the title of King odious in Israel, as that of Tarquinius did among the Romans; But if it had, by this time

the odium was worn off, and some bold steps are here taken towards so great a revolution as that amounted to. Here is,

1. The address of the elders to Samuel in this matter, ver. 4, 5. They *gathered themselves together*, by common consent, and not in a riotous tumultuous manner, but with the respect due to his character, they came to him to his house at Ramah with their address; which contained,

(1.) A remonstrance of their grievances, in short, *Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways*. Many a fairer occasion that people had had to ask a king, when they were oppressed by their neighbours, or embroiled at home, for want of a king in Israel, but a small thing will serve factious spirits for a colour to desire a change. 1. It was true that Samuel was old; but if that made him less able to ride the circuit, and sit long on the bench, yet it made him the more wise and experienced, and upon that account the fitter to rule. If he was old, was he not grown old in their service? And it was very unkind, ungrateful, nay, and unjust, to cast him off when he was old, who had spent his days in doing them good. God had saved his youth from being despicable, chap. iii. 20. yet they make his old age so, which should have been counted worthy of double honour. If old people be upbraided with their infirmities, and laid aside for them, let them not think it strange, Samuel himself was so. 2. It was true that his sons did not walk in his ways; the more was his grief, but they could not say it was his fault, he had not, like Eli, indulged them in their badness, but was ready to receive complaints against them: And if that had been the thing desired, we may well suppose, upon the making out of the charge of bribery against them, he would have superseded their commissions and punished them. But this would not content the elders of Israel, they had another project in their head.

(2.) A petition for the redress of this grievance, by setting a king over them: *Make us a king to judge us like all the nations*. Thus far it was well, that they did not rise up in rebellion against Samuel, and set up a king for themselves, *vi & armis*; but they applied themselves to Samuel, God's prophet, and humbly begged of him to do it. But it appears, by what follows, that it was an ill motion and ill made, and was displeasing to God. God designed them a king, a man after his own heart, when Samuel was dead, but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God *so nigh unto them* as they had, Deut. iv. 7. But this would not serve, they must have a king to judge them with external pomp and power like *all the nations*. A poor prophet in a mantle, though conversant in the visions of the Almighty, looked mean in their eyes, who judged by outward appearance; but a king in a purple robe, with his guards and officers of state, would look great: and such a one they must have. They knew it was in vain to court Samuel to take upon him the title and dignity of a king, but he must appoint them one. They do not say, give us a king that is wise and good, and will judge better than thy sons do, but give us a king, any body that will but make a figure. Thus foolishly did they forsake their own mercies, and under pretence of advancing the dignity of the nation to that of their neighbours, did really thrust themselves down from their own excellency, and profane their crown by *casting it to the ground*.

2. Samuel's resentment of this address, ver. 6. Let us see how he took it: 1. It *cut him to the heart*. Probably it was a surprize to him, and he had not any intimation before of their design, which made it the more grievous. The thing displeased Samuel, not when they upbraided him with his own infirmities, and his childrens irregularities, he could patiently bear what reflected on himself, and his own family, but it *displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us*, because that reflected upon God, and his honour. 2. It drove him to his knees; he gave them no answer for the present, but took time to consider of what they proposed, and prayed unto the Lord, for direction what to do, spreading the case before him, and leaving it with him, and so making himself easy. Samuel was a man much in prayer, and we are encouraged in *every thing to make our requests known to God*, Phil. iv. 6. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well as duty, to shew before God our trouble, and he gives us leave to be humbly free with him.

3. The instructions God gave him concerning this matter. They that in streights seek to God, shall find him nigh unto them, and ready to direct them. He tells him,

1. That which would be an allay to his displeasure. Samuel was much disturbed at the motion, it troubled him mightily to see his prophetic office thus slighted, and all the good turns he had done to Israel, thus ungratefully returned; but God tells him, he must not think it either hard or strange. (1.) He must not think it hard, that they had put this slight upon him, for they had herein put a slight upon God himself. *They have not rejected thee only, but they have rejected me*, I share with thee in the affront, ver. 7. Note, If God interest himself in the indignities that are done us, and the contempts that are put upon us, we may well afford to bear them patiently; nor need we think the worse of our selves, if *for his sake we bear reproach*, Psalm lxix. 7. but rather rejoice, and count it an honour, Col. i. 24. Samuel must not complain, that they were weary of his government, though just and gentle, for really

really they were weary of God's government; that was it they disliked; *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. God reigns over the heathen*, Psalm xlvii. 8. over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner, than ever any government was, a theocracy, a divine government; their judges had their call and commission immediately from God, the affairs of their nation were under his peculiar conduct. As the constitution, so the administration of their government, was by, *Thus saith the Lord*; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above any thing, so long as they kept in with God; they were indeed so much the more exposed to calamities, if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations could, which, perhaps, was the true reason, why they desired to stand upon the same terms with God, that other nations did.

(2.) He must not think it strange, nor marvel at the matter, for they do as they always have done, *ver. 8. According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, so do they unto thee.* They had at first been so very respectful and obsequious to Samuel, that he began to hope they were cured of their old stubborn disposition; but now he found himself deceived in them, and must not be surprized at it. They had always been rude to their governors, witness Moses and Aaron; nay, *They have forsaken me, and served other gods*; the greatness of their crime, in affecting new gods, may make this crime, of affecting new governors, seem little. Samuel might expect they would deal treacherously, for they were called *transgressors from the womb*, Isa. xlviii. 8. This had been *their manner from their youth up*, Jer. xxii. 21.

2. He tells him that which would be an answer to their demand. Samuel would not have known what to say, if God had not instructed him. Should he oppose the motion, it would speak a greater fondness of power and dominion than did become a prophet, and an indulgence of his sons: Should he yield to the motion, it would look like the betraying of his trust, and he would become accessary to all the ill consequences of a change. Aaron sinned in gratifying the people, when they said, *Make us gods*, he dares not therefore comply with them, when they say, *Make us a king*; but he gives them, with assurance, the answer God sent them.

1. He must tell them, that *they shall have a king. Hearken to the voice of the people*, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 9.* Not that God was pleased with their request, but as sometimes he crosseth us in love, so at other times he gratifieth us in wrath; he did so here. When they said, *Give us a king, and princes, he gave them a king in his anger.* See *Hos. xiii. 10, 11.* as he gave quails, *Psal. cvi. 15, lxxviii. 29.* God bid Samuel humour them in this matter, (1.) That they might be beaten with their own rod, and might feel, to their cost, the difference between his government, and the government of a king; see *2 Chron. xii. 8.* It soon appeared, how much worse their condition was, in all respects, under Saul, than it had been under Samuel. (2.) To prevent something worse. If they were not gratified, they would either rise in rebellion against Samuel, or universally revolt from their religion, and admit the gods of the nations, that they might have kings like them. Rather than so, let them have a king. (3.) God knows how to bring glory to himself, out of it, and serve his own wise purposes, even by their foolish counsels.

2. But he must tell them withal, that when they have a king, they will soon have enough of him, and will, when it is too late, repent of their choice. This he must *protest solemnly to them*, *ver. 9.* That, if they would have a king to rule them, as the Eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceeding heavy. They looked only at the pomp and magnificence of a king, and thought that would make their nation great and considerable among its neighbours, and would strike a terror upon their enemies; but he must bid them consider, how they would like to bear the charges of that pomp, and how they would endure that arbitrary power, which the neighbouring kings assumed. Note, Those that set their hearts inordinately upon any thing in this world, for the moderating of their desires, ought to consider, the inconveniencies, as well as conveniencies, that will attend it, and to set the one over against the other, in their thoughts. Those that submit themselves to the government of the world and the flesh, are told plainly, what hard masters they are, and what a tyranny the dominion of sin is, and yet they will exchange God's government for it.

4. Samuel's faithful delivery of God's mind to them, *ver. 10.* He told them all the words of the Lord, how ill he resented it; that he construed it a rejecting of him, and compared it with their serving other gods. That he would grant their request, if they insisted on it; but withal, had ordered him to represent to them the certain consequences of their choice, that they would be such, as, if they had any reason left them, and would allow themselves to consult their own interest, they would withdraw their petitions, and beg to continue as they were. Accordingly he lays before them, very particularly, what would be, not the right of a king in general, but *the manner of the king that should reign over them*, according to the pattern of the nations, *ver. 11.* Samuel doth not speak (as bishop Patrick expounds it) of a just and honest right of a king to do these things, for his right is quite otherwise described, in that part of Moses's law, which concerns the king's duty, but such a

right as the kings of the nations had then acquired. *This shall be the manner of the king*, i. e. 1. Thus he must support his dignity, at the expence of that which is dearest to you. 2. Thus he will abuse his power, as those that have power are apt to do; and, having the militia in his hand, you will be under a necessity of submitting to him.

If they will have such a king as the nations have; let them consider, (1.) That king must have a great retinue, abundance of servants to wait on him, grooms to look after his chariots and horses, gentlemen to ride about with him, and footmen to run before his chariots. This is the chief grandure of princes, and the imaginary glory of great men, to have a multitude of attendants: And whence must he have those? why, he will take your sons, that are free-born, have a liberal education, and whom you now have at your own dispose, and will *appoint them for himself*, *ver. 11.* They must wait upon him, and be at his beck; they that used to work for their parents and themselves, must work for him, *ear his ground, and reap his harvest*, *ver. 12.* and count it their preferment too, *ver. 16.* This would be a great change.

(2.) He must keep a great table; he will not be content to dine with his neighbours upon a sacrifice, as Samuel used to do, *chap. ix. 13.* but he must have variety of dainty dishes, forced meats, and sweet-meats, and delicate sauces; and who must prepare him these? why, he will take your daughters, the most ingenious and handy of them, whom you hoped to prefer to houses and tables of their own; and, whether you be willing or no, they must be his confectionaries, and cooks, and bakers, and the like.

(3.) He must needs have a standing army, for guards and garri-fons, and your sons, instead of being elders of your cities, and living in quiet and honour at home, must be captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and must be disposed of at the pleasure of the sovereign.

(4.) You may expect that he will have great favourites, whom, having dignified and ennobled, he must enrich, and give them estates suitable to their honour: and which way can he do that, but out of your inheritances, *ver. 14.* *He will take your fields and vineyards*, which descended to you from your ancestors, and which you hoped to have left to your posterity after you, *even the best of them*; and will not only take them to himself, you could bear that the better, but he will *give them to his servants*, who will be your masters, and bear rule over that for which you have laboured: How will you like that?

(5.) He must have great revenues to maintain his port and power with; and whence must he have them but from you. He will take the tenth of the fruits of your ground, *ver. 15.* and your cattle, *ver. 17.* you think the tenths, the double tenths, which the law of God has appointed for the support of the church, grievous enough, and grudge the payment of them; but, if you have a king, there must issue another tenth out of your estates, which will be levied with more rigour, for the support of the royal dignity. Consider the expence with the magnificence, and whether it will quit cost.

These would be their grievances, and, (1.) They would have none but God to complain to. Once they complained to the prince himself, and were answered, according to the manner of the king, *your yoke is heavy, and I will add to it*, 1 Kings xii. 11. (2.) When they complained to God, he *would not hear them*, *ver. 18.* nor could they expect that he should, both because they had been deaf to his calls and admonitions, and this trouble, in particular, they had brought upon themselves, by rejecting him, and would not believe, when he told them what would come of it. Note, When we bring our selves into distress by our own irregular desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer, and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be not better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

5. The peoples obstinacy in their demand, *ver. 19, 20.* One would think, such a representation of the consequences, as this was, coming from God himself, who can neither deceive by his word, nor be deceived in his knowledge, should have prevailed with them to wave their request: but their hearts were upon it, right or wrong, good or evil, *we will have a king over us*, whatever God or Samuel say to the contrary; we will have a king, whatever it costs us, and whatever inconvenience we bring upon our selves, or our posterity, by it. See their folly. 1. They were quite deaf to reason, and blind to their own interest. They could not answer Samuel's arguments against it, nor deny the force of them, and yet they grow more violent in their request, and more insolent. Before it was, *pray make us a king*; now it is, *nay, but we will have a king*; yea, that we will, because we will; nor will we bear to have any thing said against it. See the absurdity of inordinate desires, and how they rob men of their reason. 2. They could not stay God's time. God had intimated to them in the law, that, in due time, Israel should have a king, *Deut. xvii. 15.* and, perhaps, they had had some intimation, that the time was at hand; but they are all in haste, we in our day will have this king over us. Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer, they had had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul had been prevented. Sudden resolves, and hasty desires, make work for a long and leisu-

surely repentance. 3. That which they aimed at in desiring a king, was not only, as before, that they might be like the nations, and levelled with them, above whom God had so far advanced them; but that they might have one to judge them, and to go out before them, when they took the field, and to fight their battles. Foolish people and unwise! Could they ever desire a battle better fought for them than the last was, by Samuel's prayers, and God's thunder? *chap. vii. 10.* Was victory hereby too sure to them? and were they fond to try the chance of war at the same uncertainty that others did? It seems, so sick they are of their privileges: and what was the issue? Their first king was slain in a battle, which none of their judges ever were; so was Josiah, one of the last and best.

6. The dismissing of them with an intimation, that very shortly they should have what they asked. (1.) *Samuel rehearsed all their words in the ears of the Lord*, ver. 21. Not but that God perfectly knew it, without Samuel's report; but thus he dealt faithfully between God and Israel, as a prophet, returning the answer to him that sent him; and thus he waited on God for further direction. God is fully acquainted with the state of the case we are in care and doubt about, but he will know it from us. His rehearsing it *in the ears of the Lord*, intimates, that it was done in private; for the people were not disposed to join with him in prayer to God for direction in this matter; also, it speaks a holy familiarity, to which God graciously admits his people; they speak in the ears of the Lord, as one friend whispers with another; their communion with God is *meat they have to eat, which the world knows not of*, John xiv. 21. (2.) God gave directions that they should have a king, since they were so inordinately set upon it, ver. 22. *Make them a king*, and let them make their best of him, and thank themselves, if that very pomp and power, which they are so eager to see their sovereign in, be their plague and burthen. *So he gave them up to their own hearts lust*. Samuel told them this, but sent them home for the present, *every man to his city*, for the designation of the person must be left to God, they had now no more to do. When God saw fit to notify the choice to Samuel, they should hear further from him, in the mean time let them keep the peace, and expect the issue.

C H A P. IX.

Samuel had promised Israel, from God, that they should have a king; it is strange, that the next news is not of candidates setting up for the government, making an interest in the people, or recommending themselves to Samuel, and, by him, to God, to be put in nomination. Why doth not the prince of the tribe of Judah, whoever he is, look about him now, remembering Jacob's entail of the sceptre on that tribe? Is there never a bold aspiring man in Israel, to say, I will be king, if God will chuse me? No, none appears, whether it is owing to a culpable mean spiritedness, or a laudable humility, I know not; but sure it is what can scarce be paralleled in the history of any kingdom; a crown, such a crown, set up, and no body bids for it. Most governments began, in the ambition of the prince to rule, but Israel's, in the ambition of the people to be ruled. Had any of those elders, which petitioned for a king, afterwards petitioned to be king, I should have suspected that person's ambition to have been at the bottom of the motion; but now (let them have the praise of what was good in them, it was not so much) God having, in the law, undertaken to chuse their king, Deut. xvii. 15. they all sit still, till they hear from heaven; and that they do in this chapter, which begins the story of Saul, their first king, and, by strange steps of providence, brings him to Samuel, to be anointed privately, and so to be prepared for an election by lot, and a publick commendation to the people, which follows, in the next chapter. Here is, 1. A short account of Saul's parentage and person, ver. 1, 2. 2. A large and particular account of the bringing of him to Samuel, to whom he had been before altogether a stranger. (1.) God, by revelation, had bid Samuel expect him, ver. 15, 16. (2.) God, by providence, led him to Samuel, 1. Being sent to seek his father's asses, he was at a loss, ver. 3—5. 2. By the advice of his servant, he determined to consult Samuel, ver. 6—10. 3. By the direction of the young maidens, he found him out, ver. 11—14. 4. Samuel, being informed of God concerning him, ver. 17. treated him with respect in the gate, ver. 18—21. in the dining-room, ver. 22—24. and, at length, in private, where he prepared him to hear the surprizing news that he must be king, ver. 25—27. And these beginnings had been very hopeful and promising, if it had not been, that the sin of the people was the spring of this great affair.

1. **N**OW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward, he was higher than any of the people.

We are here told,

1. What a good family Saul was of, ver. 2. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; so was the New Testament Saul, who also was

called Paul, and he mentions it as his honour, for Benjamin was a favourite, *Rom. xi. 1. Phil. iii. 5.* That tribe had been reduced to a very small number, by the fatal war with Gibeah, and much ado there was to provide wives for those six hundred men that were the poor remains of it, out of that diminished tribe, which is here called, with good reason, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, ver. 21. Saul sprang, as a root out of a dry ground. That tribe, though fewest in number, was first in dignity, *God giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked*, 1 Cor. xii. 24. His father was Kish, a mighty man of power, or, as the margin reads it, *in substance*; in spirit stout, in body strong, in estate wealthy. The whole lot of the tribe of Benjamin coming to be distributed among six hundred men, we may suppose, their inheritances were much larger than theirs who were of other tribes, an advantage which somewhat helped to balance the disadvantage of the smallness of their number.

2. What a good figure Saul made, ver. 2. No mention is here made of his wisdom or virtue, his learning or piety, or any of the accomplishments of his mind, but that he was a tall, proper, handsome man, that had a good face, a good shape, and a good presence, graceful and well proportioned, *among all the children of Israel, there was not a goodlier person than he*; and, as if nature had marked him for preeminence and superiority, he was taller, by the head and shoulders, than any of the people, the fitter to be a match for the giants of Gath, the champions of the Philistines. When God chose a king, after his own heart, he pitched upon one that was not at all remarkable for the height of his stature, nor any thing in his countenance, but the innocency and sweetness that appeared there, *chap. xvi. 7, 12.* But when he chose a king, after the people's heart, who aimed at nothing so much as stateliness and grandure, he pitched upon this huge tall man, that, if he had no other good qualities, yet would look great. It doth not appear, that he excelled in strength, so much as he did in stature; Sampson did, and him they flighted, bound, and betrayed into the hands of the Philistines, justly therefore are they now put off with one, who, though of uncommon height, is weak as other men. They would have a king like the nations, and the nations commonly chose portly men for their kings.

3. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost; and Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. 4. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. 5. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. 6. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith, cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go. 7. Then said Saul to his servant, But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? 8. And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 9. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet, was beforetime called a Seer.) 10. Then said Saul to his servant, Well said, come, let us go: so they went unto the city where the man of God was.

Here is, 1. A great man rising from small beginnings. It doth not appear that Saul had any preferment at all, or was in any post of honour or trust, till he was chosen king of Israel. Most that are advanced rise gradually, but Saul, from the level with his neighbours, stepped at once into the throne, according to that of Hannah, *he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, 1 Sam. ii. 8. Saul, it should seem, though he was himself married, and had children grown up, yet lived in his father's house, and was subject to him. Promotion comes not by chance, nor human probabilities, but God is the judge.

2. A great event rising from small occurrences. How low doth the history begin! Being to trace Saul to the crown, we find him first employed as meanly as any we meet with called out to preferment.

1. Saul's father sends him, with one of his servants, to seek some asses that he had lost. It may be, they had no way then to give publick notice of such a number of asses, strayed or stolen out of the grounds of Kish the Benjamite. A very good law they had to oblige

oblige men to bring back an ox or an ass that went astray, but, it is to be feared, that was, as other good laws, neglected and forgotten. It is easy to observe here, that they that have, must expect to lose; that it is wisdom to look after what is lost; that no man should think it below him to know the state of his flocks; that children should be forward to serve their parents interests; Saul readily went to seek his father's asses, ver. 3, 4. His taking care of the asses is to be ascribed, not so much to the humility of his spirit, as to the plainness and simplicity of those times. But his obedience to his father in it was very commendable. Seekest thou a man diligent in his business, and dutiful to his superiors, willing to stoop, and willing to take pains; he doth, as Saul, stand fair for preferment. The servant of Kish would be faithful only as a servant, but Saul as a son, in his own business, and therefore he sent him with him. Saul and his servant travelled far on foot, it is likely, in quest of the asses, but in vain, they found them not. He missed of what he sought, but had no reason to complain of the disappointment, for he met with the kingdom which he never dreamed of.

2. When he could not find them, he determined to return to his father, ver. 5. in consideration of his father's tender concern for him, being apprehensive, that, if they staid out any longer, the old gentleman would begin to fear, as Jacob concerning Joseph, that an evil beast had devoured them, or some mischief had befallen them; he will leave caring for the asses, as much as he was in care about them, and will take thought for us. Children should take care that they do nothing to grieve or frighten their parents, but be tender of their tenderness.

3. His servant moved, (for it should seem, he had more religion in him than his master) that since they were now at Ramah, they should call of Samuel, and take his advice in this mighty affair. Observe here,

1. They were close by the city where Samuel lived, and that put it into their heads to consult him, ver. 6. *there is in this city a man of God.* Note, Wherever we are, we should improve our opportunities of acquainting our selves with those that are wise and good. But there are many that will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom.

2. The servant spoke very respectfully concerning Samuel, though he had no personal knowledge of him, but by common fame only. *He is a man of God, and an honourable man.* Note, Men of God are honourable men, and should be so in our eyes. Acquaintance with the things of God, and serviceableness to the kingdom of God, puts true honour upon men, and makes them great. This was the honour of Samuel, as a man of God, that *all he saith comes surely to pass.* This was observed concerning him, when he was a young prophet, chap. iii. 19. *God did let none of his words fall to the ground;* and still it held true.

3. They agreed to advise with him concerning the way that they should go, peradventure he can shew us. All the use they would make of the man of God, was, to be advised by him, whether they should return home; or, if there was yet any hopes of finding the asses, which way they must go next; a poor business to employ a prophet about! Had they said, let us give up the asses for lost, and now we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God, let us consult him how we may order our conversations aright, and enquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity; and then we shall not lose our journey, the proposal had been such as became Israelites; but, to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve for mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirit they were of. Most people would rather be told their fortune, than told their duty; how to be rich, than how to be saved: If it were the business of the men of God to direct for the recovery of lost asses, they would be consulted much more than they are now, it is their business to direct for the recovery of lost souls; so preposterous is the care of the most of men!

4. Saul was thoughtful what present they should bring to the man of God, what fee they should give him for his advice, ver. 7. *What shall we bring the man?* They could not present him, as Jeroboam's wife did Ahijah, with loaves and cakes, 1 Kings xiv. 3. for their bread was spent; but the servant bethought himself, that he had in his pocket the fourth part of a shekel, about seven pence half-penny in value, and that he would give to the man of God to direct them, ver. 8. that will do, saith Saul, let us go, ver. 10. Some think, when Saul talked of giving Samuel a fee, he measured him by himself, or by his sons, as if he must be hired to do an honest Israelite a kindness, and were like the false prophets, that *divined for money*, Mic. iii. 11. He came to him as a fortune-teller, rather than as a prophet, and therefore thought the fourth part of a shekel was enough to give him. But it rather seems, to be agreeable to the general usage of those times, as it is to natural equity, that those who sowed spiritual things, should reap not only eternal things, from him that employs them, but temporal things, from those, for whom they are employed. Samuel needed not their money, nor would he have denied them his advice, if they had not brought it; it is probable, when he had it, he gave it to the poor, but they brought it him as a token of their respect, and the value they put upon his office; nor did he refuse it, for they were able to give it, and, though it was but little, it was as the widow's mite.

But Saul, as he never thought of going to the man of God, till the servant proposed it, so it should seem he mentioned the want of a present, as an objection against their going, would not own, that he had money in his pocket, but when the servant generously offered to be at the charge, then, well said, saith Saul, come let us go. Most people love a cheap religion, and like it best, when they can devolve the expence of it on others.

5. The historian here takes notice of the name then given to prophets, they called them *Seers*, or seeing men, ver. 9. not but that the name prophet was then used, and applied to such persons, but that of seers was more in use. Note, Those that are prophets must first be seers; they who undertake to speak to others of the things of God, must have an insight into those things themselves.

11. ¶ And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? 12. And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is* before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for *there is* a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place.

13. As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice, and afterwards they eat that he bidden. Now therefore get ye up, for about this time ye shall find him. 14. And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

15. ¶ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, 16. To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. 17. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people.

Here, 1. Saul, by an ordinary enquiry, is directed to Samuel, ver. 11, — 14. Gibeah of Saul was not twenty miles from Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and was near to Mizpeh where he often judged Israel, and yet, it seems, Saul had lived so very privately, and had taken so little notice of publick affairs, that he had never seen Samuel, for when he met him, ver. 18. he did not know him, so that there was no cause to suspect any secret compact, or collusion, between them in this matter. *I knew him not*, saith John Baptist concerning Christ, John i. 31. Yet I do not think it any commendation to Saul, that he was a stranger to Samuel. However, the maid-servants of Ramah, whom they met with at the places of drawing Water, could give him and his servant intelligence concerning Samuel; and very particular they were in their directions, ver. 12, 13. We should always be ready to give what assistance we can to those that are enquiring after God's prophets, and further them in their enquiries.

Even the maid-servants could tell them, (1.) That there was a sacrifice that day in the high-place, it being either an ordinary festival, or an extraordinary day of prayer and thanksgiving, with which sacrifices were joined. The tabernacle being deprived of the ark, the altar there had not now the reputation it had formerly had, nor were they tied to it, as they would be when God had again chosen a place to put his name in, and therefore now other places were allowed. Samuel built an altar at Ramah, chap. vii. 17. and here we have him making use of that altar. (2.) That Samuel came that day to the city, either from his circuit, or from his country-seat. He was such a publick person that his motions were generally known. (3.) That this was just the time of their meeting to feast before the Lord upon the sacrifice; about this time you will find him in the street going up to the high-place. They knew the hour of the solemn feast. (4.) That the people would not eat till Samuel came, not only because he was the worthiest person, and they ought in good manners to stay for him, and he was, as some think, the maker of the feast, the sacrifice being offered at his charge, and upon his account; but because as a man of God: whoever made the feast he must bless the sacrifice, i. e. those parts of the sacrifice which they feasted upon; which may be considered, 1. As a common meal, and so this is an instance of that great duty of craving a blessing upon our meat before we partake of it. We cannot expect benefit by our food without that blessing, and we have no reason to expect that blessing if we do not pray for it. Thus we must give glory to God as our benefactor, and own our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him. Or, (2.) As a religious assembly. When the sacrifice was offered, which was the ceremony, Samuel blessed it, i. e. he prayed over it, and offered up spiritual sacrifices with it, which were the substance; and afterwards, when the holy duties were performed, they did eat. Let the soul first be served. The feast upon the sacrifice being a sacred rite, it was requisite that

should, in a particular manner, be blessed, as is the christian eucharist: They feasted in token of their reconciliation to God by virtue of the sacrifice, and their participation of the benefits of it; and Samuel blessed it, *i. e.* he prayed to God to grace the solemnity with his special presence, that it might answer those great ends.

Bishop Hall observes, what a particular account those maid-servants could give of the usages of those sacred feasts, and infers from it, That "where there is practice and example of piety in the better sort, there will be a reflection of it upon the meanest. It is no small advantage to live in religious places; for we shall be much too blame if all goodness fall beside us."

Saul and his servant followed the directions given them, and very opportunely met Samuel going to the high-place, the synagogue of the city. *ver.* 14. This seemed purely accidental, but the divine providence ordered it for the forwarding of this great event. The wise God serves very great and certain purposes, by very small and casual occurrences. A sparrow lights not to the ground without our Father.

2. Samuel, by an extraordinary revelation, is informed concerning Saul. He was a Seer, and therefore must see this in a way peculiar to himself.

1. God had told him the day before, that he would, at this time, send him the man that should serve the people of Israel for such a king as they wished to have *like all the nations*, *ver.* 15, 16. He told him in his ear, *i. e.* privately, by a secret whisper to his mind, or, perhaps, by a still small voice, some soft and gentle sounds conveyed to his ear, probably when he was praying in secret for direction in that and other affairs of the nation. He had spoken in the ears of the Lord. chap. viii. 21. and now God spoke in his ear, in token of friendship and familiarity, for he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets, as secrets in their ear, *Amos* iii. 7. God told him before, that it might not be a surprize to him; and, perhaps, it was in expectation of it, that he appointed the feast and the sacrifice, for the imploring of God's blessing upon this great and important affair, though he might keep the particular occasion in his own breast, God having only told it him in his ear. The Hebrew phrase is, *He uncovered the ear of Samuel*; to which some allude, for the explication of the way of God's revealing himself to us; he not only speaks, but *uncovers our ear*. We have naturally a covering on our ears, so that we perceive not what God saith, *Job* xxxiii. 14. but when God will manifest himself to a soul he uncovers the ear, saith, *Ephatha, be opened*, he takes the veil from off the heart, *2 Cor.* iii. 16.

Though God had in displeasure granted their request for a king, yet here he speaks tenderly of Israel; for even in wrath he remembers mercy. 1. He calls them again and again, *his people*; though a peevish and provoking people, yet mine still. 2. He sends them a man to be captain over them, that they might not be a body without a head, and to save them out of the hand of the Philistines, which, perhaps, was more than many of them aimed at in desiring a king. 3. He doth it with a gracious respect to them and to their cry, *I have looked upon my people*, and their cry is come unto me. He gratified them with what they cried for, as the tender mother humours the froward child, lest it should break its heart. And (as bishop Patrick observes) though he would not hear their cry to relieve them against the oppression of their kings, chap. viii. 18. yet he was so gracious as to make those kings instruments of their deliverance from the oppression of their neighbours: which was more than they had reason to expect.

2. When Saul came up towards him in the street, God again whispered Samuel in the ear, *ver.* 17. Behold the man whom I spoke to thee of. Saul being a man of unusual stature, it is natural to think that Samuel fixed his eye upon him at a distance, and, perhaps, looked the more wistfully towards him, because the hour was now come, when God would send him the man that should be king of Israel, and he fancied this might be he; but that he might be fully satisfied, God told him expressly, *That the man that shall restrain* (for magistrates are heirs of restraint) *in my people Israel*.

18. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seers house is. 19. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to day; and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. 20. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found: and on whom is all the desire of Israel? is it not on thee, and on all thy fathers house? 21. And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? 22. And Samuel took Saul, and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. 23. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. 24. And the cook took up the shoulder,

and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul: and Samuel said, Behold, that which is left, set it before thee, and eat; for unto this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said, I have invited the people: so Saul did eat with Samuel that day. 25. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. 26. And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid thy servant pass on before us, (and he passed on) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

Providence having, at length, brought Samuel and Saul together, we have here an account of what passed between them in the gate, at the feast, and in private.

1. In the gate of the city; passing through that Saul found him, *ver.* 18. and little thinking that he was Samuel himself, asked him the way to Samuel's house; tell me where the seers house is, for there he expected to find him. See how mean a figure Samuel made, though so great a man: he took not any state, had no attendants; no ensigns of honour carried before him, nor any distinguishing habit, no not when he went to church, but appeared, in all respects, so much a common person, that Saul, though he was told he should meet him, never suspected that it was he, but, as if he looked more like a porter than a prophet, asked him the way to the seer's house. Thus is great worth oftentimes hid under a very despicable appearance. Samuel knew that it was not the house but the man that he wanted, and therefore answered him, *I am the seer*, the person you enquire for, *ver.* 19. Samuel knew him before he knew Samuel; thus, though all that are called to the kingdom of glory are brought to know God, yet first they were known of him, *Gal.* iv. 9.

Now (1.) Samuel obliges him to stay with him till the next day; the greatest part of this day had been spent in sacrificing, and the rest of it was to be spent in holy feasting, and therefore to morrow I will let thee go, and not sooner; now go up before me to the high place; let us pray together, and then we will walk together. Saul had nothing in his mind but to find his asses, but Samuel would take him off from that care, and dispose him to the exercises of piety; and therefore bids him go to the high place, and go before him, because, it may be, some business obliged Samuel to call by the way. (2.) He satisfies him about his asses, *ver.* 20. set not thy mind on them, be not in further care about them, they are found. By this Saul might perceive that he was a prophet, that he could give him an answer to the enquiry which he had not yet made, and tell him what he thought; and from thence might infer, if a man of God could do this, much more doth God himself understand our thoughts afar off. (3.) He surprizeth him with an intimation of preferment before him, On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not a king that they are set upon, and there is never a man in Israel that will suit them so as thou wilt. It doth not appear that the country had as yet any eye upon him for the government, because they had left it wholly to God to chuse for them; but such a one as he they wished for: and his advancement would be the advancement of his family and relations, as Abner, and others.

To this strange intimation Saul returns a very modest answer, *ver.* 21. Samuel, he thought, did but banter him, because he was a tall man, but a very unlikely man to be a king, for though the historian saith, *ver.* 1. his father was a mighty man of power, yet he himself speaks diminishingly of his tribe and family: Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons, when grown up to be a man he was called a little one, *Gen.* xlv. 20. That tribe diminished by the war of Gibeah, and I am a Benjamite; my family the least, probably a younger house; not in any place of honour or trust, no not in their own tribe. Gideon had expressed himself thus, *Judg.* vi. 15. An humble disposition is a good presage of preferment.

2. At the publick feast; thither Samuel took him and his servant. Though the advancing of Saul would be the deposing of Samuel, yet that good prophet was so far from envying him, or bearing him any ill-will for it, that he was the first and forwardest man to do him honour, in compliance with the will of God. If this be the man whom God has chosen, though he be none of Samuel's particular friends or confidants, yet he is heartily welcome to his table, nay, to his bosom. We may suppose, it was no unreasonable kindness to Saul to give him a meals meat, for it seems by what he said, *ver.* 7. that all their meat and money were spent. But this was not all, Samuel treats him not as a common person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him.

(1.) He set him in the best place, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, give this man place, *Luk.* xiv. 9. though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who, in their own city, would claim precedency, yet the master of the feast made Saul, and his servant too (who, if he were a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state) sit in the chiefest place, *ver.* 22. Note, Civil respects

respects must be paid to those, who, in civil things, have the precedence given them by the divine providence.

(2.) He presented him with the *best dish*; which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming, *ver. 16.* he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests, and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate; no, it was a plain shoulder of mutton, *ver. 23, 24.* the right shoulder of the peace-offerings was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers, *Lev. vii. 32.* the next in honour to that was the left shoulder, which, probably, was always allotted to those that sat at the upper-end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's morsel at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significance in this dish, the shoulder notes strength, and the breast, which some think went with it, notes affection: he that was king had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him.

3. What passed between them in private; both that evening and early the next morning, Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house, *ver. 25, 26.* we may suppose Samuel now told him the whole story of the people's desire of a king, the grounds of their desire, and God's grant of it; to all which Saul, living very private, was perhaps a stranger; he satisfied him that he was the person God had pitched upon for the government; and whereas Saul would object, that Samuel was in possession, and he would not, for all the world, take it out of his hands; Samuel, we may suppose, gave him all the assurances he could desire of his willingness to resign. Early in the morning he sent him towards home, brought him part of the way, bid him send his servant before, that they might be private, *ver. 27.* and there, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, he anointed him, and therein shewed him the word of the Lord, i. e. gave him full satisfaction, that he was the person chosen to be king, for he would not jest with that sacred rite. It is by the unction of the holy Ghost, that Christ, the great prophet, shews us the word of the Lord, 1 John ii. 27. *the same anointing teacheth you of all things.*

CHAP. X.

We left Samuel and Saul walking together, probably some private way over the fields, down from Ramah, perhaps in the paths of the vineyards, and Saul expecting to hear from Samuel the Word of God. Now here we have 1. The anointing of Saul, then and there, ver. 1. The signs Samuel gave him, ver. 2, — 6. And instructions, ver. 7, 8. 2. The accomplishment of those signs to the satisfaction of Saul, ver. 9, — 13. 3. His return to his father's house, ver. 14, — 16. 4. His public election by lot, and solemn inauguration, ver. 17, — 25. 5. His return again to his own city, ver. 26, 27. It is a great work that is here a doing, the setting up not only of a monarch, but monarchy itself in Israel; and therefore, in all the advances towards it, much of God is seen.

1. **T**hen Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?* 2. When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah, and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? 3. Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. 4. And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread, which thou shalt receive at their hands. 5. After that, thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy. 6. And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 7. And let it be when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion shall serve thee, for God is with thee. 8. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal, and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

Samuel is here executing the office of a prophet, giving Saul full assurance from God that he should be king, as he was afterwards, according to these prophecies which went before him.

1. He anointed him and kissed him, *ver. 1.* This was not done in a solemn assembly, but being done by divine appointment, that made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God's institutions are great and honourable, though the circumstances of their administration be never so mean and despicable. (1.) Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him, that it was God's act to make him king, *Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee?* and in token of that, the high-priest was anointed to his office, which signified the conferring of those gifts upon him that were requisite for the discharge of his office; and the same was intimated in the anointing of kings; for, whom God calls he qualifies, and that is a good proof of a commission. These sacred unctions, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or anointed One, the King of the church, and high-priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. It was common oil, no doubt, which Samuel used, and we read not of his blessing it, or praying over it. But it was only a vial of oil that he anointed him with, the vessel brittle, because his kingdom would soon be cracked and broken; and the quantity small, because he had but little of the Spirit conferred upon him, to what David had, who was therefore anointed with a horn of oil, and so was Solomon, and Jehu with a box of oil. (2.) By kissing him, he assured him of his own approbation of the choice, not only his consent to it, but his complacency in it, though it abridged his power and eclipsed his glory, and the glory of his family. *God has anointed thee,* says Samuel, *to be king,* and I am satisfied and very well pleased, in pledge of which take this kiss. It was likewise a kiss of homage and allegiance, hereby he not only owns him to be king, but his king, and in this sense we are commanded to *kiss the Son*, *Psal. ii. 12.* God has anointed him, and therefore we must thus acknowledge him, and do homage to him. In Samuel's explication of the ceremony he minds him, 1. Of the nature of the government to which he is called, he was anointed to be a captain, a commander indeed, which speaks honour and power, but a commander in war, which speaks care, and toil, and danger. 2. Of the original of it: *The Lord hath anointed thee.* By him he ruled, and therefore must rule for him, in dependence on him, and with an eye to his glory. 3. Of the end of it: it is over his inheritance, to take care of that, protect it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, as a steward whom a great man sets over his estate, to manage it for his service, and give an account of it to him.

2. For his further satisfaction he gives him some signs, which should come to pass immediately, this very day; and they were such as would not only confirm the word of Samuel in general, and prove him a true prophet; but would confirm this word to Saul in particular, that he should be king.

1. He should presently meet with some that would bring him intelligence from home, of the care his father's house was in concerning him, *ver. 2.* these he would meet hard by Rachel's sepulchre. The first place he directs him to was a sepulchre, the sepulchre of one of his ancestors, for Rachel died in travel with Benjamin, there he must read a lecture of his own mortality, and now he had a crown in his eye must think of his grave, in which all his honour would be laid in the dust. Here two men would meet him, perhaps sent on purpose to look after him, and would tell him the asses were found, and his father was in pain concerning him, saying, *What shall I do for my son?* He would reckon it happened well that he met with these messengers; and it is good to eye providence in favourable conjunctures, though the matter be minute, and be encouraged to trust it in greater matters.

2. He should next meet with others going to Beth-el, where it should seem there was a high-place for religious worship, and these men were bringing their sacrifices thither, *ver. 3, 4.* It was a token for good to one that was designed for the government of Israel, wherever he came to meet with people going to worship God. It is supposed those kids and loaves, and the bottle of wine which the three men had with them, were designed for sacrifice, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend the sacrifice: yet Samuel tells Saul they would give him two of their loaves, and he must take them. This would look to us now like the relieving of a beggar: Saul must hereafter remember the time when he received alms, and must therefore be humble and charitable to the poor. But, perhaps, it would then be construed a fit present for a prince; and as such Saul must receive it, the first present that was brought him, by such as knew not what they did, nor why they did it, but God put it into their hearts, which made it more fit to be a sign to him. These two loaves, which were the first tribute paid to this new anointed king, might serve for an admonition to him, not to spend the wealth of his crown in luxury, but still to be content with plain food. Bread is the staff of life.

3. The most remarkable sign of all, would be his joining with the prophets that he should meet with, under the influence of a spirit of prophecy which should at that time come upon him. What God works in us by his spirit, serves much more for the confirming of faith, than any thing wrought for us by his providence. He here

tells him, *ver. 5, 6.* (1.) Where this would happen, *at the hill of God*, where there was a *garison of the Philistines*, which is supposed to be near Gibeah, his own city, for there was the Philistines garison, *chap. xiii. 3.* Perhaps, it was one of the articles of Samuel's agreement with them, that they should have a garison there, or rather, after they were subdued in the beginning of his time they got ground again, so far as to force this garison into that place, and thence God raised up the man that should chastise them. There was a place that was called the *hill of God*, because of one of the schools of the prophets built upon it; and such respect did even Philistines themselves pay to religion, that a garison of their soldiers suffered a school of God's prophets to live peaceably by them, and did not only not dislodge them, but not restrain or disturb the publick exercises of their devotion. (2.) Upon what occasion: He should meet a *company of prophets with musick before them, prophesying*, and with them he should join himself. These prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretel things to come, nor did God reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbours, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel that they had not only prophets, but companies of prophets, who gave them good instructions, and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them. Now the word of the Lord was not precious, as it had been when Samuel was first raised up, who had been instrumental in founding these colleges, or religious houses, whence, it is probable, the synagogues took their rise. What pity was it that Israel should be weary of the government of such a man, who, though he had not, as a man of war, expelled the Philistines, yet (which was a greater kindness to Israel) had, as a man of God, settled the schools of the prophets. Musick was then used as a proper means to dispose the mind to receive the impressions of the good Spirit, as it did Elisha's, *2 Kings iii. 15.* but we have no reason to look for the same benefit by it now, unless we saw it as effectual as it was then in Saul's case, to drive away the evil spirit. These prophets had been at the high-place, probably offering sacrifice, and now they came back singing psalms. We should come from holy ordinances with our hearts greatly enlarged in holy joy and praise. See *Psal. cxxxviii. 5.* Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned thereby *into another man*, from what he had been while he lived in a private capacity. The Spirit of God, by his ordinances, changeth men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no, may be questioned.

3. He directs him to proceed in the administration of his government, as providence should lead him, and as Samuel should advise him. 1. He must follow providence in ordinary cases, *ver. 7. Do as occasion shall serve thee.* Take such measures as thine own prudence shall direct thee. But, 2. In an extraordinary streight that would hereafter befall him at Gilgal, and would be the most critical juncture of all other, when he would have special need of divine aids, he must wait for Samuel to come to him, and must tarry *seven days* in expectation of him, *ver. 8.* How his failing in this matter proved his fall we find afterward, *chap. xiii. 11.* It is now a plain intimation to him, that he was upon his good behaviour, and, though a king, must act under the direction of Samuel, and do as he should order him. The greatest of men must own themselves in subjection to God and his word.

9. ¶ And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him, and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11. And it came to pass when all that knew him beforetime, saw, that behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, *What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?* 12. And one of the same place answered and said, *But who is their father?* Therefore it became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* 13. And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place. 14. ¶ And Saul's uncle said unto him, and unto his servant, *Whither went ye?* And he said, *To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.* 15. And Saul's uncle said, *Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.* 16. And Saul said unto his uncle, *He told us plainly that the asses were found.* But of the matter of the kingdom whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul has now taken his leave of Samuel, much amaz'd, we may well suppose, at what had been done to him, is almost ready to question, whether he be awake or no, and whether it be all a dream. Now here we are told,

1. What occur'd by the way, *ver. 9.* Those signs which Samuel had given him came to pass very punctually; but that which gave him the greatest satisfaction of all, was this, he found imme-

diately that God had given him *another heart*. A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with: seeking his asses is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, and redressing the grievances of Israel; making laws, administering justice, and providing for the publick safety, these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery, as he never thought he should have been conscious to himself of: He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, that is low, and mean, and narrow, and concerned only about his corn and cattle; but the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. Whom God calls to service he will make fit for it. If he advance to another station, he will give another heart, to those who sincerely desire to serve him with their power.

2. What occurred when he came near home; they came to the hill, *ver. 10. i. e. to Gibeah, or Geba*, which signifies a hill; and so the Chaldee here takes it as a proper name; he met with the prophets as Samuel had told him, and the Spirit of God came upon him; strongly and suddenly, so the word signifies; but not so as to rest and abide upon him. It came on, so as to go off quickly: however, for the present, it had a strange effect upon him; for he immediately joined with the prophets in their devotion, and that with as good a decorum, and as great a transport of affection, as any of them; *He prophesied among them.*

Now, 1. His prophesying was publicly taken notice of, *ver. 11, 12.* He was now among his acquaintance, who, when they saw him among the prophets, called one another to come and see a strange sight. This would prepare them to accept of him as a king, though one of themselves, when they had seen how God had advanced him to the honour of a prophet. The seventy elders prophesied before they were made judges, *Numb. xi. 25.* Now, (1.) They all admired to see Saul among the prophets. *What is this that is come to the son of Kish?* Though this school of the prophets was near his father's house, yet he had never associated with them, nor shewed them any respect, perhaps, had sometimes spoken slightly of them, and now to see him prophesying among them, was a surprize to them, as it was long after, when his name-sake, in the New Testament, preached that gospel, which he had before persecuted, *Acts ix. 21.* Where God gives another heart, it will soon shew itself. (2.) One of them, that was wiser than the rest, asked, *Who is their father*, or instructor? Is it not God? Are they not all taught of him? Do they not all owe their gifts to him? And is he limited? Cannot he make Saul a prophet, as well as any of them, if he pleases? Or, Is not Samuel their father? Under God, he was so: and Saul had now lately been with him, which, by his servant, he might know. No marvel for him to prophesy, who lay last night under Samuel's roof. (3.) It became a proverb, commonly used in Israel, when they would express their wonder at a bad man's either becoming good, or, at least, being found in good company. *Is Saul among the prophets?* Note, Saul among the prophets, is a wonder to a proverb. Let not the worst be despaired of, yet let not an external shew of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; for Saul among the prophets, was Saul still.

But, 2. His being anointed was kept private: When he had done prophesying, (1.) It should seem he uttered all his words before the Lord, and recommended the affair to his favour, for he went straight to the high place, *ver. 13.* to give God thanks for his mercies to him, and to pray for the continuance of those mercies. But, (2.) He industriously concealed it from his relations: His uncle, who either met with him at the high place, or light of him as soon as he came home, took him to examination, *ver. 14.* Saul owned, for his servant knew it, that they had been with Samuel, and that he told them the asses were found, but said not a word of the kingdom, *ver. 14, 15.* This was an instance, (1.) Of his humility; many a one would have been so elevated with this surprizing elevation, as to proclaim it upon the house-top. But Saul, though he might please himself with it, in his own breast, did not pride himself in it, among his neighbours. The heirs of the kingdom of glory are well enough pleased, that *the world knows them not*, *1 John iii. 1.* (2.) Of his prudence. Had he been forward to proclaim it, he would have been envied, and he knew not what difficulty that might have created him. Samuel had communicated it to him as a secret, and he knows how to keep counsel. Thus it appeared, that he had another heart, a heart fit for government. (3.) Of his dependence upon God: He doth not go about to make an interest for himself, but leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and, for his own part, sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

17. ¶ And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; 18. And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you. 19. And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations: and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present your selves before the LORD by your tribes, and

and by your thousands. 20. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. 21. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. 22. Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither: and the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. 23. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward. 24. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is none like him among all the people?* And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. 25. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD: and Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26. ¶ And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. 27. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace.

Saul's nomination to the throne, is here made publick, in a general assembly of the elders of Israel, the representatives of their respective tribes at Mizpeh. It is probable, this convention of the states was called, as soon as conveniently it might after Saul was anointed, for if there must be a change in their government, the sooner the better: it might be of bad consequence to be long in the doing. The people being met in a solemn assembly, in which God was in a peculiar manner present, and therefore it is said, they were called together unto the Lord, ver. 17. Samuel acts for God among them.

1. He reproves them for casting off the government of a prophet, and desiring that of a captain. Shews them, ver. 18. how happy they had been under a divine regimen; when God ruled them, he delivered them out of the hand of them that oppressed them, and what would they desire more? Could the mightiest man of valour do that for them, which the Almighty God had done? He likewise shews them, ver. 19. what an affront they had put upon God, who had himself saved them out of all their tribulations, by his own power, and by such as he had immediately called and qualified, in desiring a king to save them. He tells them in plain terms, *ye have this day rejected your God*, you have in effect done it, so he construes it, and might justly, for your so doing, reject you. They that can live better by sense than by faith, that stay themselves upon an arm of flesh, rather than upon the almighty arm, forsake a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. And some make their obstinacy, in this matter, to be a presage of their rejecting Christ, in casting off whom they cast off God, that he should not reign over them.

2. He puts them upon chusing their king by lot: he knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him, but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them, who would not acquiesce in the choice, if it depended upon his single testimony: and therefore that every tribe, and every family of the chosen tribe, might please themselves with having a throw for it, he calls them to the lot, ver. 19. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes, ver. 20. and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish, ver. 21. By this method it would appear to the people, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king, for *the disposal of the lot is of the Lord*: It would also prevent all disputes and exceptions, for *the lot causeth contention to cease, and parteth between the mighty*. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee, that they were setting up a family, that would soon be put down again, for dying Jacob had, by the spirit of prophecy, entailed the dominion upon Judah; that is the tribe that must rule as a lion, Benjamin shall only raven as a wolf, Gen. xlix. 10, 27. Those therefore that knew the scriptures, could not be very fond of the doing of that which they foresaw must ere long be undone again.

3. It is with much ado, and not without further enquiries of the Lord, that Saul is at length produced. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected he should answer to his name at the first call, but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him, ver. 21. he had hid himself among the stuff, ver. 22. So little fond was he now of that power, which yet, when he was in possession of, he could not without the utmost indignation think of parting with. He withdrew, in hopes that upon his not appearing, they would proceed to another choice; or thus to express his modesty, for, by what had already passed, he knew he must be the man. We may suppose, he was at this time really averse to take upon him the government. (1.) Because he was conscious to himself of unfitness for so great a trust. He had not been bred up to books, or arms, or courts, and feared he should be guilty of some fatal blunder. (2.) Because it would expose him to the envy of his neighbours that

were ill affected towards him. (3.) Because he understood by what Samuel had said, that the people sinned in asking a king, and it was in anger that God granted their request. (4.) Because the affairs of Israel were at this time in a bad posture; the Philistines were strong, the Ammonites threatening, and he must be bold indeed, that will set sail in a storm.

But the congregation believing that choice well made which God himself made, would leave no way untried to find him out, on whom the lot fell. *They enquired of the Lord*, either by the high priest, and his breast-plate of judgment, or by Samuel, and his spirit of prophecy; and the Lord directed them where they should find him, hid among the carriages, and thence *they fetched him*, ver. 23. Note, None will be losers at last by their humility and modesty. Honour, like the shadow, follows those that flee from it, but flees from those that pursue it.

4. Samuel presents him to the people, and they accept of him. He needed not mount the bench or scaffold to be seen, when he stood upon even ground with the rest, he topt them all, was seen above them all, for he was taller than any of them by *head and shoulders*, ver. 23. Look you, saith Samuel, what a king God has chosen for you, just such a one as you wished for, *There is none like him among all the people*, that has so much majesty in his countenance, such a graceful stateliness in his mien, and is in the crowd like a cedar among the shrubs. Let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave and gallant man? The people hereupon signified their approbation of the choice, and their acceptance of him, they *shouted and said, Let the king live*, i. e. let him long reign over us, in health and prosperity. Subjects were wont to testify their affection and allegiance to their prince, by their good wishes, and those turned (as our translation doth this) into addresses to God, *Psalms lxxii. 15. Prayer shall be made for him continually*, Psalm xx. 1. Samuel had told them, they would soon be weary of their king, but, in the mind they are now in, they will never be so: *Let him live*.

5. Samuel settles the original contract between them, and leaves it upon record, ver. 25. He had before told them, *the manner of the king*, chap. viii. 11. how he would abuse his power; now he tells them, *the manner of the kingdom*, or rather, the law, or judgment, or constitution of it; what power the prince might challenge, and the utmost of the property the subject might claim. He fixed the land-marks between them, that neither might encroach upon the other; let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, and that will preserve a good understanding between them ever after. The learned bishop Patrick thinks, he now repeated and registred what he had told them, chap. viii. 11. of the arbitrary power their kings would assume; that it might hereafter be a witness against them, that they had drawn the calamity upon themselves, for they were warned what it would come to, and yet they would have a king.

6. The convention was dissolved, when the solemnity was over. *Samuel sent every man to his house*. Here were no votes past, nor, for ought appears, so much as a motion made, for the raising of money to support the dignity of their new elected king; if therefore he afterwards think fit to take what they do not think fit to give, which yet it was necessary he should have, they must thank themselves. They went every man to his house, pleased with the name of a king over them, and *Saul also went home to Gibeah*, to his father's house, not puffed up with the name of a kingdom under him. At Gibeah he had no palace, no throne, no court, yet thither he goes. If he must be a king, as one mindful of the rock out of which he was hewn, he will make his own city the royal city, nor will he be ashamed (as too many are, when they are preferred) of his mean relations. Such a humble spirit as this, puts a beauty and lustre upon great advancements. The condition rising, and the mind not rising with it, behold, how good and pleasant it is.

But how did the people stand affected to their new king? The generality of them, it should seem, did not shew themselves much concerned, they *went every man to his own house*, their own domestic affairs lay nearer their hearts, than any interests of the publick; this was the general temper. But, (1.) There were some so faithful as to attend him, ver. 26. *A band of men whose hearts God had touched*. Not the body of the people, but a small company, who, either because they were fond of their own choice of a king, or because they were pleased with God's choice of this king, or because they have so much more sense than their neighbours, as to conclude, that if he be a king he must be respected accordingly, went with him to Gibeah as his life-guard. There were those, *whose hearts God had touched*, in this instance, to do their duty. Note, Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, at any time, it must be ascribed to the grace of God. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because he has touched it. One touch is enough, when it is divine.

(2.) There were others so spiteful as to affront him; children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke, that would be pleased with nothing that either God or Samuel did; they *despised him*, ver. 27. for the meanness of his tribe and family, the smallness of his estate, and privacy of his education; and they said, *How shall this man save us?* Yet they did not propose any man more likely; nor, whoever they had, must their salvation come from the man, but from God. They would not join with their neighbours in testifying an affection to him, and his government, by bringing him presents,

sents, or addressing him upon his accession to the crown. Perhaps, those discontented spirits were most earnest for a king, and yet, now they had one, they quarrelled with him, because he was not altogether such a one as themselves. It was reason enough for them not to like him, because others did. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. God hath set him king upon the holy hill of Sion: There is a remnant that submit to him, rejoice in him, bring him presents, and follow him wherever he goes; and they are such *whose hearts God has touched*, whom he has made willing in the day of his power: But there are others who despise him, who ask, *How shall this man save us?* They are offended in him, stumble at his external meanness, and they will be broken by it.

Lastly, How did Saul resent the ill carriage of those that were disaffected to his government? *He held his peace*, margin. *He was as though he had been deaf.* He was so far from resenting it, that he seemed not to take notice of it. Which was an evidence, both of his humility and modesty, and the mercifulness of his disposition, and also, that he was well satisfied in his title to the crown; for those are commonly most jealous of their honour, and most revengeful of affronts, that gain their power by ill means. Christ held his peace, when he was affronted, for it was the day of his patience; but there is a day of recompence coming.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have the first-fruits of Saul's government, in the glorious rescue of Jabesh-gilead out of the hands of the Ammonites. Let not Israel thence infer, that therefore they did well to ask a king, God could and would have saved them without one; but let them admire God's goodness, that he did not reject them, when they rejected him, and acknowledge his wisdom in the choice of the person, whom, if he did not find fit, yet he made fit, for the great trust he called him to, and enabled, in some measure, to merit the crown by his publick services, before it is fixed on his head by the publick approbation. Here is, 1. The great extremity, to which the city of Jabesh-gilead was reduced, on the other side Jordan, by the Ammonites, ver. 1.—3. 2. Saul's great readiness to come to their relief, whereby he signalized himself, ver. 4.—10. 3. The good success of his attempt, by which God signalized him, ver. 11. 4. Saul's tenderness, notwithstanding this, towards those that had opposed him, ver. 12, 13. 5. The publick confirmation and recognition of his election to the government, ver. 14, 15.

1. **T**HEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. 2. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. 3. And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee. 4. ¶ Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lift up their voices, and wept.

The Ammonites were ill neighbours to those tribes of Israel, that lay next them, though descendents from just Lot, and for that reason were dealt civilly with by Israel. See *Deut. ii. 19.* Jephthah in his time had humbled them, but now the sin of Israel had put them into a capacity to make head again, and avenge that quarrel. The city of Jabesh-gilead had been some ages ago destroyed by Israel's sword of justice, for not appearing against the wickedness of Gibeah, *Judg. xxi. 10.* and now being replenished again, probably, by the posterity of those that then escaped the sword, it is in danger of being destroyed by the Ammonites, as if some ill fate attended the place. Nahash, king of Ammon, (*1 Chron. xix. 1.*) laid siege to it. Now here,

1. The besieged beat a parley, *ver. 1. Make a covenant with us, and we will surrender upon terms, and serve thee.* They had lost the virtue of Israelites, else they had not thus lost the valour of Israelites, nor tamely yielded to serve an Ammonite, without one bold struggle for themselves. Had they not broke their covenant with God, and forsaken his service, they needed not thus to have courted a covenant with a Gentile nation, and offered themselves to serve them.

2. The besiegers offer them base and barbarous conditions; they will spare their lives, and take them to be their servants, upon condition they shall *put out their right eyes*, *ver. 2.* The Gileadites were content to part with their liberty and estates, for the ransom of their blood; and had the Ammonites taken them at their word, the matter had been so settled immediately, and the Gileadites would not have sent out for relief: but their abject concessions make the Ammonites more insolent in their demands, and they cannot be content to have them their servants, but, (*1.*) They must torment them, and put them to pain, exquisite pain, for so the thrusting

out of an eye would do. (2.) They must disable them for war, and render them incapable, though not of labour, that would have been a loss to their lords, yet of bearing arms; for in those times they fought with shields in their left hands, which covered their left eye, so that a soldier without his right eye, was, in effect, blind. (3.) They must put a *reproach upon all Israel*, as weak and cowardly, that would suffer the inhabitants of one of their chief cities to be thus miserably used, and not offer to rescue them.

3. The besieged desire and obtain seven days time to consider of this proposal, *ver. 3.* If Nahash had not granted them this respite, we may suppose, the horror of the proposal would have made them desperate, and they would rather have died with their swords in their hands, than have surrendered to such merciless enemies; therefore Nahash, not imagining it possible, that, in so short a time, they should have relief, and being very secure of the advantages he thought he had against them, in a bravado gave them seven days, that the reproach upon Israel, for not rescuing them, might be the greater, and his triumphs the more illustrious. But there was a providence in it, that his security might be his infatuation and ruin.

4. Notice is sent of this to Gibeah. They said they would send messengers *to all the coasts of Israel*, *ver. 3.* which made Nahash the more secure, for that he thought would be a work of time, and none would be forward to appear, if they had not one common head; and, perhaps, Nahash had not yet heard of the new elected king; but the messengers, either of their own accord, or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and, not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon it, *ver. 4.* They would sooner lament their brethrens misery and danger, than think of helping them; shed their tears for them, than shed their blood. They wept, as despairing to help the men of Jabesh-gilead, and fearing, lest, if that frontier city were lost, the enemy would penetrate into the very bowels of their country, which now appeared in great hazard.

5. And behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field, and Saul said, What *aileth* the people that they weep? and they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. 6. And the spirit of God came upon Saul, when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. 7. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen: and the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. 8. And when he numbred them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9. And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To morrow by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. 10. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. 11. And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies, and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites, until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

What is here related, turns very much to the honour of Saul, and shews the happy fruits of that other spirit with which he was endued. Observe here,

1. His humility. Though he was anointed king, and accepted by the people, yet he did not think it below him to know the state of his own flocks, but went himself to see them, and came in the evening, with his servants, *after the herd out of the field*, *ver. 5.* This was an evidence that he was not puffed up with his advancement, as those are most apt to be, that are raised from a mean estate. Providence had not yet found him business as a king, he left all to Samuel, and therefore, rather than be idle, he would, for the present, apply himself to his country business again; though the sons of Belial would, perhaps, despise him the more for it, such as were virtuous and wise, and loved business themselves, would think never the worse of him. He had no revenues settled upon him for the support of his dignity, and he was desirous not to be burthensome to the people; for which reason, like Paul, he worked with his hands; for if he neglect his domestick affairs, how must he maintain himself and his family? Solomon gives it as a reason why men should look well to their herds, because *the crown doth not endure to every generation*, *Prov. xxvii. 23, 24.* Saul's did not, he must therefore provide something surer.

2. His concern for his neighbours. When he perceived them in tears, he asked, *What aileth the people that they weep?* Let me know, *that*

that if it is a grievance which can be redressed, I may help them, and that if not, I may weep with them. Good magistrates are in pain, if their subjects be in tears.

3. His zeal for the safety and honour of Israel. When he heard of the insolence of the Ammonites, and the distress of a city, a mother in Israel, *the spirit of God came upon him*, and put great thoughts into his mind, and *his anger was kindled greatly*, ver. 6. He was angry at the insolence of the Ammonites; angry at the mean and sneaking spirit of the men of Jabesh-gilead, angry that they had not sent him notice sooner of the Ammonites descent, and the extremity they were likely to be reduced to. He was angry to see his neighbours weeping, when it had been fitter for them to have prepared for war. It was a brave and generous fire that was now kindled in the breast of Saul, and such as became his high station.

4. The authority and power he exerted upon this important occasion; he soon let Israel know, that, though he was retired to his privacy, he had a care for the publick, and knew how to command men into the field, as well as how to drive cattle out of the field, ver. 5, 7. He sent summons to all the coasts of Israel, to shew the extent of his power beyond his own tribe, even to all the tribes, and ordered all the military men forthwith to appear in arms at a general rendezvous in Bezek. Observe, 1. His modesty, in joining Samuel in commission with himself; he would not execute the office of a king, without a due regard to that of a prophet. 2. His mildness in the penalty threatned against those that should disobey his orders. He hews a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sends the pieces to the several cities of Israel, with this threatning, that whoever declines the publick service, not thus shall it be done to him, but thus shall it be done to his oxen. God had threatned it as a great judgment, *Deut. xxviii. 31. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof*. It was necessary the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was nothing so severe, as that which was affixed to the like order by the whole congregation, *Judg. xxi. 5. Saul affecting to shew his government more gentle than that which they had been under*. The effect of this summons was, that the militia, or trained bands of the nation, *came out as one man*, and the reason given is, because *the fear of the Lord fell upon them*. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to observe his orders by the fear of God, and a regard to him who had made Saul their king, and them members one of another. Note, Religion, and the fear of God, will make men good subjects, and good soldiers, and good friends, to the publick interests of their country. They that fear God, will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

5. His conduct and prudent proceedings in this great affair, ver. 8. he numbred those that came in to him, that he might know his own strength, and how to canton his forces in the best manner their numbers would allow. It is the honour of princes to know the numbers of their men, but it is the honour of the King of kings that *there is not any number of his armies*, Job xxv. 3. In this muster, it seems, Judah, though numbred by it self, made no great figure, for, as it was one tribe of twelve, so it was but a eleventh part of the whole number, thirty thousand in three hundred and thirty; though the rendezvous was at Bezek, in that tribe; they wanted either the numbers, or the courage, or the zeal, that that tribe used to be famous for; so low was it just before the sceptre was brought into it in David.

6. His faith and confidence, and (grounded on that) his courage and resolution, in this enterprize. It should seem, that those very messengers, which brought the tidings from Jabesh-gilead, Saul sent into the country to raise the militia, who would be sure to be faithful and careful in their own business, and then he now sends back to their distressed countrymen, with this assurance, (in which, it is probable, Samuel encouraged him) *to morrow*, by such an hour, before the enemy can pretend that the seven days are expired, *you shall have deliverance*, ver. 9. Be you ready to do your part, and we will not fail to do ours. Do you fallly out upon the besiegers, while we surround them. Saul knew he had a just cause, a clear call, and God on his side, and therefore doubted not of success. This was good news to the besieged Gileadites, whose right eyes had wept themselves dry for their calamities, and now began to fail with looking for relief, and to ake in expectation of the doom of the ensuing day, when they must look their last; the greater the exigence, the more welcome the deliverance. When they heard it, they were glad, relying on the assurances that were sent them. And they sent into the enemy's camp, ver. 10. to tell them, that next day they would be ready to meet them, which the enemies understood as an intimation that they despaired of relief, and so were made the more secure by it; if they took not care, by sending out scouts, to rectify their own mistake, they must thank themselves if they were surprized, the besieged were under no obligation, to give them notice of the help they were assured of.

7. His industry and close application to this business: If he had been bred up to war from his youth, and had led regiments as oft as he had followed droves, he could not have gone about an affair of this nature more dextrously, nor more diligently. When the spirit of the Lord comes upon men, it will make them expert, even without experience. A vast army (especially in comparison with the present usage) Saul had now at his foot, and a long march before him; near sixty miles, and over Jordan too. No cavalry in

his army, but all infantry, which he divides into three battalions, ver. 11. And observe, 1. With what incredible swiftness he flew to the enemy; in a day and a night he came to the place of action, where his own fate, and that of Israel, must be determined. He had past his word, and would not break it: nay, he was better than his word, for he promised help next day, *by that time the sun was hot*, ver. 9. but brought it before day, *in the morning watch*, ver. 11. whom God helps, he *helps right early*, Psalm xvi. 5. 2. With what incredible bravery he flew upon the enemy; betimes in the morning, when they lay dreaming of the triumphs they expected that day over the miserable inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, before they were aware he was in the midst of their host; and his men being marched against them in three columns, they surrounded them on each side, so that they could have neither heart, nor time, to make head against him.

Lastly, To compleat his honour, God crowned all these virtues with success, Jabesh-gilead was rescued, and the Ammonites totally routed; he had now the day before him to compleat his victory in, and so compleat a victory it was, that they which remained, after a great slaughter, were scattered so, that *two of them were not left together*, to encourage or help one another, ver. 11. We may suppose that Saul was the more vigorous in this matter, 1. Because there was some alliance between the tribe of Benjamin, and the city of Jabesh-gilead. That city had declined joining with the rest of the Israelites to destroy Gibeah, which was then punished as their crime, but, perhaps, was now remembered as their kindness, when Saul of Gibeah came with so much readiness and resolution to relieve Jabesh-Gilead. Yet that was not all; two thirds of the Benjamites, that then remained, were provided with wives from that city, *Judg. xxi. 14.* so that most of the mothers of Benjamin, were daughters of Jabesh-gilead, for which city Saul, being a Benjamite, had therefore a particular kindness; and we find they returned his kindness, chap. xxxi. 11, 12. 2. Because it was the Ammonites invasion that induced the people to desire a king, so Samuel saith, chap. xii. 12. so that if he had not done his part in this expedition, he had failed their expectations, and had for ever forfeited their respects.

12. ¶ And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. 13. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel. 14. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. 15. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal: and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the LORD: and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

We have here the improvement of that glorious victory which Saul had obtained, not the improvement of it abroad, though we take it for granted, the men of Jabesh-gilead, having so narrowly saved their right eyes, would with them now discern the opportunity they had of avenging themselves upon these cruel enemies, and disabling them ever to straiten them in like manner again; now shall they be avenged on the Ammonites, for their right eyes condemned, as Sampson on the Philistines, *for his two eyes put out*, Judg. xvi. 28. But the account here given, is of the improvement of it at home.

1. The people took this occasion to shew their jealousy for the honour of Saul, and their resentment of the indignities done him. Samuel, it seems, was present, if not in the action, it was too far for him to march, yet to meet them when they returned victorious, and to him, as judge, the motion was made (for they knew Saul would not be judge in his own cause) that the sons of Belial, that *would not have him to reign over them*, should be brought forth and slain, ver. 11. Saul's good fortune (as foolish men commonly call it) went further with them to confirm his title, than either his choice by lot, or Samuel's anointing him. They had not courage thus to move for the persecution of those that opposed him, when he himself looked mean, but now his victory made him look great, now nothing will serve but they must be put to death.

2. Saul took this occasion to give further proofs of his clemency, for, without waiting for Samuel's answer, he himself quashed the motion, ver. 13. *There shall not a man be put to death this day*, no not those men, those ill men that had abused him, and therein reflected on God himself, 1. Because it was a day of joy and triumph, *to day the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel*; and since God has been so good to us all, let us not be harsh one to another. Now God has made the heart of Israel in general so glad, let not us make sad the hearts of any particular Israelites. 2. Because he hoped they were by this day's work brought to a temper, were now convinced, that this man, under God, could save them; now honoured him, whom before they had despised; and, if they be but reclaimed, he is secured from receiving any disturbance by them, and therefore his point is gained; if an enemy be made a friend, that is more to our advantage than to have him slain. And all good princes consider, that their power is for edification, not for destruction.

3. Samuel took this occasion to call the people together, *before the Lord in Gilgal*, ver. 14, 15. 1. That they might publicly give God thanks for their late victory. There they rejoiced greatly, and that God might have the praise of that which they had the comfort of, they *sacrificed to him*, as the giver of all their successes, *sacrifices of peace-offerings*. 2. That they might confirm Saul in the government, more solemnly than it had been yet done, that he might not retire again to his obscurity. Samuel would have the kingdom renewed; he would renew his resignation, and the people should renew their approbation, and so, in concurrence with, or rather, in attendance upon, the divine nomination, they made Saul king, making it their own act and deed to submit to him.

C H A P. XII.

We left the general assembly of the states together, in the close of the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we have Samuel's speech to them, when he resigned the government into the hands of Saul. In which, 1. He clears himself from all suspicion or imputation of mismanagement, while the administration was in his hands, ver. 1,—5. 2. He minds them of the great things God had done for them, and for their fathers, ver. 6,—13. 3. He sets before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 14, 15. 4. He awakens them to regard what he said to them, by calling to God for thunder, ver. 16,—19. 5. He encourages them with hopes that all should be well, ver. 20,—25. This is his farewell sermon to that august assembly, and Saul's coronation sermon.

1. **A**ND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old, and gray-headed, and behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. 3. Behold, here I am, witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. 5. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

Here, 1. Samuel gives them a short account of the late revolution, and of the present posture of their government, by way of preface to what he had further to say to them, ver. 1, 2. (1.) For his own part, he had spent his days in their service; he began betimes to be useful among them, and had continued long so. *I have walked before you*, as a guide to direct you, as a shepherd that leads his flock, Psal. lxxx. 1. *from my childhood unto this day*. As soon as he was illuminated with the light of prophecy in his early days, he began to be a burning and shining light to Israel; and now my best days are done, *I am old and grey-headed*, therefore they were the more unkind to cast him off; yet, therefore he was the more willing to resign, finding the weight of government heavy upon his stooping shoulders. Old, and therefore the more able to advise them, and the more observant they should be of what he said, for *days shall speak*, and the *multitude of years shall teach wisdom*; and there is a particular reverence owing to the aged, especially aged magistrates, and aged ministers. Old, and therefore not likely to live long, perhaps, may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again, and therefore take notice what I say. (2.) As for his sons, *Behold* (saith he) *they are with you*, you may, if you please, call them to an account for any thing they have done amiss. They are present with you, and have not run their country upon this revolution; they are upon the level with you, subjects to the new king as well as you; if you can prove them guilty of any wrong, you may prosecute them now by a due course of law, punish them, and oblige them to make restitution. (3.) As for their new king, Samuel had gratified them in setting him over them, ver. 1. *I have hearkened to your voice in all that ye said to me*, being desirous to please you, if it were possible, and make you easy, though to the discarding of my self and family; and now will you hearken to me, and take my advice? The change was now perfected, *behold the king walketh before you*, ver. 2. he appears in publick, ready to serve you in publick business. Now you have made your selves like the nations in your civil government, and have cast off the divine administration in that, now take heed lest you make your selves like the nations in religion, and cast off the worship of God.

2. He solemnly appeals to them concerning his own integrity, in the administration of the government, ver. 3. *Witness against me, whose ox have I taken?* By this he intended, (1.) To convince them of the injury they had done him, in setting him aside, when

they had nothing amiss to charge him with; his government had no fault, but that it was too cheap, too easy, too gentle. Also, of the injury they had done themselves, in turning off one that did not so much as take an ox or an ass from them, to put themselves under the power of one that would take their fields and vineyards, nay, and their very sons and daughters from them, chap. viii. 11. so unlike would the manner of the king be from his manner. (2.) To preserve his own reputation: they that heard of Samuel's being rejected as he was, would be ready to suspect, that certainly he had done some ill thing, or he had never been so ill treated; so that it was necessary for him to make this challenge, that it might appear upon record, that it was not for any iniquity in his hands that he was laid aside, but to gratify the humour of a giddy people, who owned they could not have a better man to rule them, only they desired a bigger man. There is a just debt which every man owes to his own good name, especially men in publick stations, which is to guard it against unjust aspersions, and suspicions, that we may finish our course with honour, as well as joy. (3.) As he designed hereby to leave a good name behind him, so he designed to leave his successor a good example before him; let him write after his copy, and he will write fair. (4.) Samuel designed, in the close of his discourse, to reprove the people, and therefore he begins with a vindication of himself: for he that will, with confidence, tell another of his sin, must see to it, that he himself be clear.

Now observe, 1. What it is that Samuel here acquits himself from. (1.) He had never, under any pretence whatsoever, taken that which was none of his own, ox or ass; had never distrained their cattle for tribute, fines or forfeitures, nor used their service without paying for it. (2.) He had never defrauded those with whom he dealt, nor oppressed those that were under his power. (3.) He had never taken bribes to pervert justice, nor was never biased by favour or affection, to give judgment in a cause against his conscience. 2. How he appeals to those that had slighted him concerning it. *Here I am, witness against me*, if you have any thing to lay to my charge, do it now *before the Lord, and the king*, the proper judges. He puts honour upon Saul, by owning himself accountable to him, if he had been guilty of any wrong.

3. Upon this appeal he is honourably acquitted; he did not expect that they should do him honour at parting, though he well deserved it, and therefore mentioned not any of the good service he had done them, for which they ought to have applauded him, and returned him the thanks of the house; all he desired was, that they should do him justice, and that they did, ver. 4. readily owning, 1. That he had not made his government oppressive to them, nor used his power to their wrong. 2. That he had not made it expensive to them, *neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand*, for the support of thy dignity. Like Nehemiah, he did not require the bread of the governor, Neh. v. 18. had not only been righteous, but generous; *had coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, Acts xx. 33.

4. This honourable testimony born to Samuel's integrity, is left upon record to his honour, ver. 5. *The Lord is witness*, who searcheth the heart, *and his anointed is witness*, who trieth overt acts, and the people agree to it, *He is witness*. Note, The testimony of our neighbours, and especially the testimony of our own consciences for us, that we have in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort, under the slights and contempts that are put upon us. Demetrius is a happy man, that has a good report of all men, and of the truth it self, 3 John 12.

6. **5** And Samuel said unto the people, *It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron*, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. 7. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD, of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you, and to your fathers. 8. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. 10. And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. 11. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelt safe. 10. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me: Nay, but a king shall reign over us; when the LORD your God was your King. 13. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired: and

and behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. 14. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye, and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the LORD your God. 15. But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel having sufficiently secured his own reputation, instead of upbraiding the people upon it, with their unkindness to him, sets himself to instruct them, and keep them in the way of their duty, and then the change of the government would be the less damage to them.

1. He minds them of the great goodness of God to them, and to their fathers; gives them an abstract of the history of their nation, that, by the consideration of the great things God had done for them, they might be for ever engaged to love him, and serve him. Come, saith he, ver. 7. stand still, stand in token of reverence, when God is speaking to you, stand still in token of attention, and composedness of mind, and give me leave to reason with you. Religion has reason on its side, *Isa. i. 18.* The work of ministers is to reason with people, not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade, to convince mens judgments, and so to gain their wills and affections. Let reason rule men, and they will be good. He reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord, *i. e.* both the benefits he hath bestowed upon you, in performance of his promises, and the punishments he has inflicted on you for your sins. His favours are called *his righteous acts*, Judg. v. 11. because in them he is just to his own honour. He not only puts them in mind of what God had done for them in their days, but of what he had done of old, in the days of their fathers, because the present age had the benefit of God's former favours. We may suppose, his discourse was much larger than as here related.

(1.) He minds them of their deliverance out of Egypt, into that house of bondage Jacob and his family came down poor and little; when they were oppressed, they cried unto God, who advanced Moses and Aaron, from mean beginnings, to be their deliverers, and the founders of their state and settlement in Canaan, ver. 6, 8.

(2.) He minds them of the miseries and calamities which their fathers brought themselves into, by forgetting God, and serving other gods, ver. 9. they enslaved themselves, for they were sold as criminals and captives into the hand of oppressors: they exposed themselves to the desolation of war, their neighbours fought against them.

(3.) He minds them of their fathers repentance and humiliation before God for their idolatries. *They said, we have sinned*, ver. 10. Let not them imitate the sins of their fathers, for what they had done amiss, they had many a time wished undone again; in the day of their distress they had sought unto God, and had promised to serve him, let their children then reckon that good at all times, which they found good in bad times.

(4.) He minds them of the glorious deliverances God had wrought for them, the victories he had blessed them with, and their happy settlements, many a time, after days of trouble and distress, ver. 11. He instances in some of their judges, Gideon and Jephthah, great conquerors in their time; among the rest he mentions Bedan, whom we read not of any where else: it might be some eminent person, that was instrumental of salvation to them, though not recorded in the book of Judges; such a one as Shamgar, of whom it is said, that he delivered Israel, but not that he judged them, *Judg. iii. 31.* Perhaps, this Bedan guarded and delivered them on one side, at the same time when some other of the judges appeared and acted for them on another side. Some think it was the same with Jair, so the learned Mr. Pool; others, the same with Sampson, who was Ben-Dan, a son of Dan, of that tribe, and the spirit of the Lord came upon him, Be-Dan in Dan, in the camp of Dan. Samuel mentions himself, not to his own praise, but to the honour of God, who had made him an instrument of subduing the Philistines.

(5.) At last he puts them in mind of God's late favour to the present generation, in gratifying them with a king, when they would prescribe to God, by such a one to save them out of the hand of Nahash, king of Ammon, ver. 12, 13. now it appears, that that was the immediate occasion of their desiring a king: Nahash threatened them, they moved Samuel to nominate a general; he told them God was commander in chief in all their wars, and they needed no other; what was wanting in them should be made up by his power; *the Lord is your king*; but they insisted on it, *no, but a king shall reign over us.* And now, saith he, you have a king. A king of your own asking, let that be spoken to your shame; but a king of God's making, let that be spoken to his honour; and the glory of his grace. God did not cast them off then, when they, in effect, cast him off.

2. He shews them, that they were now upon their good behaviour, they and their king; let them not think, that they had now cut themselves off from all dependence upon God, and that now they had a king of their own, the making of their own fortunes (as

men foolishly call it) was in their own hands; no, still their judgment must proceed from the Lord. He tells them plainly,

1. That their obedience to God would certainly be their happiness, ver. 14. if they would not revolt from God to idols, nor rebel against him, by breaking his commandments, but would persevere in their allegiance to him, would fear his wrath, serve his interests, and obey his will, then they and their king should certainly be happy; but observe, how the promise is expressed, *Then ye shall continue following the Lord your God*; that is, (1.) Ye shall continue in the way of your duty to God, which will be your honour and comfort. Note, Those that are sincere in their religion, God will give them grace to persevere in it: those that follow God faithfully, God will enable them to continue following him. And observe, That following God, is work that is its own wages. It is the matter of a promise, as well as of a precept. (2.) Ye shall continue under the divine conduct and protection. *Ye shall be after the Lord*, so it is in the original, *i. e.* he will go before you to lead and prosper you, and make your way plain; *The Lord is with you, while you be with him.*

2. That their disobedience would as certainly be their ruin, ver. 15. *If ye rebel*, think not that your having a king will secure you against God's judgments, and that now you have in this instance made your selves like the nations, you may sin at as cheap a rate as they can. No, *the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers*, when they offended him, in the days of the judges. We mistake if we think that we can evade God's justice, by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

16. ¶ Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. 17. *Is it not wheat-harvest to day?* I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain: that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. 18. So Samuel called unto the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. 19. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins, *this evil*, to ask us a king. 20. ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: (ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; 21. And turn ye not aside: for then *should ye go* after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain) 22. For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great names sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. 23. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way. 24. Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. 25. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Two things Samuel here aims at,

1. To convince the people of their sin in desiring a king. They were now rejoicing before God, in and with their king, chap. xi. 15. and offering to God the sacrifices of praise, which they hoped God would accept of; and this, perhaps, made them think, that there was no harm in their asking a king, but really they had done well in it: therefore Samuel here charges it upon them as their sin, as wickedness, *great wickedness in the sight of the Lord*. Note, Though we meet with prosperity and success in a way of sin, yet we must not therefore think the more favourably of it. They have a king, and if they carry themselves well, their king may be a very great blessing to them, and yet Samuel will have them perceive and see, that their *wickedness is great in asking a king*. We must never think well of that which God in his law frowns upon, though in his providence he seem to smile upon it.

Observe, 1. The expressions of God's displeasure against them for asking a king. At Samuel's word God sent prodigious thunder and rain upon them, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was never seen nor known before, ver. 16, 17, 18. Thunder and rain have natural causes, and sometimes terrible effects. But Samuel made it to appear, that this was designed by the almighty power of God on purpose to convince them, that they had done very *wickedly in asking a king*; not only by its coming in an unusual time in wheat-harvest, and this a fair clear day, when there appeared not to the eye any signs of a storm, but by his giving notice of it before. Had there happened to be thunder and rain at the time when he was speaking to them, he might have improved it for their awakening and conviction, as we may in a like case: but to make it no less than a miracle before it came, (1) He spoke to them of it, ver. 16, 17. *Stand and see this great thing*. He had bid them *stand and hear*,

hear, ver. 7. but because he did not see that his reasoning with them affected them, so stupid were they and unthinking, now he bids them *stand and see*. If what he said in a *still small voice* did not reach their hearts, nor his doctrine, which dropped as the dew, they shall hear God speaking to them in dreadful claps of thunder, and the great rain of his strength. He appealed to this as a sign, *I will call upon the Lord, he shall send thunder*, shall send it just now, to confirm the word of his servant, and to make you see that I said true, when I told you that God was angry with you for *asking a king*. And the event proved him a true prophet, the sign and wonder came to pass.

2. He spoke to God for it. Samuel called unto the Lord, and in answer to his prayer, even while he was yet speaking, *the Lord sent thunder and rain*. By this Samuel made it to appear, not only what a mighty influence God has upon this earth, that he could of a sudden, when natural causes did not work towards it, produce this dreadful rain and thunder, and bring them out of his treasures, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* but also what a mighty interest he had in heaven, that God would thus *hearken to the voice of a man*, *Josh. x. 14.* and answer him *in the secret place of thunder*, *Psal. lxxxi. 7.* Samuel, that son of prayer, was still famous for success in prayer.

Now by this extraordinary thunder and rain sent on this occasion, (1.) God testified his displeasure against them in the same way in which he had formerly testified it, and at the prayer of Samuel too against the Philistines, *chap. vii. 10. The Lord discomfited them with a great thunder*. Now Israel rebelled and vexed his holy spirit, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them with the same weapons which, not long before, had been employed against their adversaries, *Isa. lxiii. 10.* (2.) He shewed them their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God or Samuel, promising themselves more from an arm of flesh, than from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their king *thunder with a voice like God?* *Job xl. 9.* Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers? (3.) He intimated to them, that how serene and prosperous soever their condition seemed to be now they had a king, like the weather in wheat-harvest, yet, if God pleased, he could soon change the face of their heavens, and persecute them with his tempest, as the Psalmist speaks.

2. The impressions which this made upon the people. It startled them very much, as well it might. (1.) *They greatly feared the Lord and Samuel*; though when they had a king they were ready to think they must fear him only. God made them know that he is *greatly to be feared*, and his prophets for his sake. Now they were rejoicing in their king God taught them to rejoice with trembling. (2.) They owned their sin and folly in desiring a king, *ver. 19. We have added to all our sins this evil.* Some people will not be brought to a sight of their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. Samuel did not extort this confession from them till the matter was settled and the king confirmed, lest it should look as if he designed by it rather to establish himself in the government, than to bring them to repentance. Now they were *flattering themselves in their own eyes, their iniquity was found to be hateful*, *Psal. xxxvi. 2.* (3.) They earnestly begged Samuel's prayers, *ver. 19. Pray for thy servants that we die not.* They were apprehensive of their danger by the wrath of God, and could not expect that he should hear their prayers for themselves, and therefore they intreat Samuel to pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom a while ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have *Christ to reign over them*, would yet be glad to have him intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. And the time may come, when those that have despised and ridiculed praying people, will value their prayers, and desire a share in them. *Pray (says he) to the Lord thy God*, we know not how to call him ours, but if thou hast any interest in him improve it for us.

2. He aims to confirm the people in their religion, and engage them for ever to cleave unto the Lord. The design of his discourse is much the same with Joshua's, *chap. xxiii. and xxiv.*

1. He would not that the terrors of the Lord should frighten them from him, for they were intended to frighten them to him, *ver. 20. Fear not, though ye have done all this wickedness*, and though God is angry with you for it, yet do not therefore over-run his service, nor turn from following him. *Fear not.* i. e. despair not, fear not with amazement, the weather will clear up after the storm. *Fear not*, for though God will frown upon his people, yet he will not forsake them, *ver. 22. for his great names sake*, do not you forsake him then. Every transgression in the covenant, though it displease the Lord, yet doth not throw us out of covenant, and therefore God's just rebukes must not drive us from our hope in his mercy. The fixedness of God's choice is owing to the freeness of it; we may therefore hope he will not forsake his people, because it has *pleased him to make them his people*. Had he chosen them for their good-merits, we might fear he would cast them off for their ill-merits, but choosing them *for his names sake*; for his names sake he will not leave them.

2. He cautions them against idolatry. *Turn not aside from God*, and the worship of him, *ver. 20.* and again, *ver. 21.* for if ye turn aside from God, whatever ye turn aside to you will find it is a vain thing, that can never answer your expectations, but will certainly deceive you if you trust to it; it is a broken reed, a broken cistern. Idols are so, they are enmity and a lie: whatever we make a God of we shall find it so. Creatures in their own place are good things,

but when put in God's place they are vain things. Idols could not profit those that sought to them in their wants, nor deliver those that sought to them in their streights, for they were vain, and not what they pretended to be: *An idol is nothing in the world*, *1 Cor. viii. 4.*

3. He comforts them with an assurance that he would continue his care and concern for them, *ver. 23.* They desired him to pray for them, *ver. 19.* he might have said, Go to Saul and get him to pray for you, the king that you have put in my room, but so far is he from upbraiding them with their disrespects to him, that he promiseth them much more than they asked. (1.) They asked it him as a favour, he promised it as a duty, and startles at the thought of neglecting it. *Pray for you*, saith he, *God forbid, that I should sin against the Lord in not doing it.* Note, It is a sin against God not to pray for the Israel of God, especially for those of them that are under our charge: and good men are afraid of the guilt of omissions. (2.) They asked him to pray for them at this time, and upon this occasion, but he promiseth to continue his prayers for them, and not to cease as long as he lived. Our rule is, to *pray without ceasing*, we sin if we restrain prayer in general, and in particular if we cease praying for the church. (3.) They asked him only to pray for them, but he promiseth to do more for them, not only to pray for them, but to teach them; though they were not willing to be under his government as a judge, he would not therefore deny them his instructions as a prophet: And they may be sure he would teach them no other but the *good and the right way*: and the right way is certainly the good way; the way of duty, the way of pleasure and profit.

4. He concludes with an earnest exhortation to practical religion and serious godliness, *ver. 24, 25.* The great duty here pressed upon us is, to *fear the Lord*. He had said, *ver. 20. Fear not* with a slavish fear, but here fear the Lord with a filial fear. As the fruit and evidence of this, serve him in the duties of religious worship, and of a godly conversation in truth and sincerity, and not in shew and profession only, with your heart, and *with all your heart*, not dissembling, not dividing. And two things he urgeth by way of motive, (1.) That they were bound in gratitude to serve God, considering *what great things he had done for them*, to engage them for ever to his service. (2.) That they were bound in interest to serve him, considering what great things he would do against them, if they should *still do wickedly, ye shall be destroyed* by the judgments of God, *both ye and your king* that you are so proud of, and expect so much from; and that will be a blessing to you if you keep in with God. Thus as a faithful watchman he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul.

C H A P. XIII.

They that desired a king like all the nations, fancied that when they had one they should look very great and considerable; but in this chapter we find it proved much otherwise. While Samuel was joined in commission with Saul things went well, chap. xi. 7. But now Saul began to reign alone all went to decay, and Samuel's words began to be fulfilled. Ye shall be consumed, both you and your king; for never was the state of Israel further gone in a consumption than in this chapter. 1. Saul appears here a very silly prince; (1.) Infatuated in his counsels, ver. 1.—3. (2.) Invaded by his neighbours, ver. 4, 3. (3.) Deserted by his soldiers, ver. 6, 7. (4.) Disordered in his own spirit, and sacrificing in confusion, ver. 8.—10. (5.) Chidden by Samuel, ver. 11.—13. (6.) Rejected of God from being king, ver. 14. 2. The people appear here a very miserable people. (1.) Disheartened and dispersed, ver. 6, 7. (2.) Diminished, ver. 15, 16. (3.) Plundered, ver. 17, 18. (4.) Disarmed, ver. 19.—23. This they got by casting off God's government, and making themselves like the nations, all their glory departed from them.

1. **S**aul reigned one year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2. Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. 3. And Jonathan smote the garison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it: and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. 4. And all Israel heard say, that Saul had smitten a garison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines: and the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. 5. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. 6. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets,

thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. 7. And *some* of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead: as for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

We are not told wherein it was that the people of Israel offended God, so as to forfeit his presence, and turn his hand against them, as Samuel had threatened, *Chap. xii. 15.* but doubtless they left God, else he had not left them, as here it appears he did; for,

1. Saul was very weak and impolitick, and did not order his affairs with discretion. *Saul was the son of one year*, so the first words are in the original, a phrase which we make to signify the date of his reign, but ordinarily it signifies the date of ones birth; and therefore some understand it figuratively, he was as innocent and good as a child of a year old; so the Chaldee paraphrase, he was *without fault, like the son of a year*. But if we admit a figurative sense, it may as well intimate, that he was ignorant and imprudent, and as unfit for business as a child of a year old; and the following particulars make that more his character than the former. But we take it rather, as our own Translation has it, *Saul reigned one year*, and nothing happened that was considerable, it was a year of no action; but in his second year he did as follows:

(1.) He chose him a band of *three thousand men*; of which he himself commanded two thousand, and his son Jonathan one thousand, *ver. 2.* the rest of the people he dismissed to their tents. If he intended these only for the guard of his person, and his honorary attendants, it was impolitick to have so many; if for a standing army, in apprehension of danger from the Philistines, it was no less impolitick to have so few; and, perhaps, the confidence he put in this select number, and his disbanding the rest of that brave army with which he lately beat the Ammonites, *chap. xi. 8.* was looked upon as an affront to the kingdom, gave a general disgust, and was the reason he had so few at his call when he had occasion for them. The prince that relies on a particular party weakens his own interest in the whole community,

(2.) He ordered his son Jonathan to surprize and destroy the garison of the Philistines that lay near him in Geba, *ver. 3.* I wish it were not a violation or infraction of some articles with the Philistines, and that it was not done treacherously and perfidiously; the reason why I suspect it is, because it is said that, for doing it, *Israel was had in abomination*, or, as the word is, *did stink with the Philistines*, *ver. 4.* as men void of common honesty, and whose word could not be relied on. If it were so, we will lay the blame not on Jonathan, who did it, but on Saul, his prince and father, who ordered him to do it, and, perhaps, kept him in ignorance of the truth of the matter. Nothing makes the name of Israel odious to them that are without, so much as the fraud and dishonesty of those that are called by that worthy name. If professors of religion cheat and over-reach, break their word, and betray their trust, religion suffers by it, and is *had in abomination with the Philistines*. Who may one trust, if not an Israelite, one that, it is expected, should be *without guile*?

(3.) When he had thus exasperated the Philistines then he began to raise forces, which; if he had acted wisely, he would have done before. When the Philistines had a vast army ready to pour in upon him, to avenge the wrong he had done them, then was he *blowing the trumpet through the land*, among a careless, if not a disaffected people, saying, *Let the Hebrews hear*, *ver. 3.* and so as many as thought fit came to Saul to Gilgal, *ver. 4.* But now the generality, we may suppose, drew back, either in dislike of Saul's politicks, or in dread of the Philistines power, who, if he had summoned them sooner, would have been as ready at his beck as they were when he marched against the Ammonites. We often find that after-wit would have done much better before, and have prevented much inconvenience.

2. Never did the Philistines appear in such a formidable body as they did now, upon this provocation which Saul gave them; we may suppose they had great assistance from their allies, for, *ver. 5.* besides six thousand horse, which in those times, when horses were not so much used in war as they are now, was a great body, they had an incredible number of chariots, thirty thousand in all, most of them, we may suppose, were carriages for the bag and baggage of so vast an army, not chariots of war. But their foot was *innumerable as the sand of the sea-shore*; so jealous were they for the honour of their nation, and so much enraged at the baseness of the Israelites in destroying their garison. If Saul had asked counsel of God before he had given the Philistines this provocation, he and his people might the better have born this threatening trouble which they had now brought on themselves by their folly.

3. Never were the people of Israel so faint-hearted, so sneaking, so very cowardly as they were now. Some considerable numbers, it may be, came to Saul to Gilgal, but hearing of the Philistines numbers and preparations, their spirits sunk within them. Some think because they did not find Samuel there with Saul. They that, a while ago, were weary of him, and wished for a king, now had small joy of their king unless they could see him under Samuel's direction. Sooner or later men will be made to see that God and his prophets are their best friends. Now they saw the Philistines making war upon them, and Samuel not coming in to help them, they knew not what to do; *mens hearts failed them for fear*. And, 1. Some absconded. Rather than run upon death among the Phi-

listines they buried themselves alive in caves and thickets, *ver. 6.* See what work sin makes; it exposeth men to perils, and then robs them of their courage and spirits them. A single person, by faith, can say, *I will not be afraid of ten thousand*, *Psalm. iii. 6.* but here thousands of degenerate Israelites tremble at the approach of a great croud of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards. 2. Others fled, *ver. 7.* They went over Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from the danger, and to a place where they had lately been victorious over the Ammonites; where they had triumphed they hoped to be sheltered. 3. Those that staid with Saul followed him trembling, expecting no other but to be cut off, and having their hands and hearts very much weakened by the desertion of so many of their troops. And, perhaps, Saul himself, though he had so much honour as to stand his ground, yet had no courage to spare, wherewith to inspire his trembling soldiers.

8. ¶ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him, 9. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering. 10. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11. ¶ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves to Michmash: 12. Therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced my self therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. 13. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

Here is, 1. Saul's offence in offering sacrifice before Samuel came. Samuel, when he anointed him, had ordered him to tarry for him seven days in Gilgal, promising, that at the end of those days he would be sure to come to him, and both offer sacrifices for him, and direct him what he should do. This we had, *chap. x. 8.* Perhaps that order, though inserted there, was given him afterwards; or was given him as a general rule to be observed in every publick congress at Gilgal; or, as is most probable, though not mentioned again, was lately repeated with reference to this particular occasion; for, it is plain, Saul himself understood it as obliging him from God now to stay till Samuel came, else he would not have made so many excuses as he did, for not staying, *ver. 11.* This order Saul broke, he staid till the seventh day, yet had not patience to wait till the end of the seventh day; perhaps, he began to reproach Samuel as false to his word, careless of his country, and disrespectful to his prince, thought it more fit that Samuel should wait for him, than he for Samuel. However, 1. He presumed to offer sacrifice without Samuel, and nothing appears to the contrary but that he did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet, as if, because he was a king, he might do any thing: a piece of presumption, which king Uzziah paid dear for, 2 *Chron. xxvi. 16.* 2. He determined to engage the Philistines without Samuel's directions, though he had promised to *show him what he should do*. So self-sufficient Saul was, that he thought it not worth while to stay for a prophet of the Lord, either to pray for him, or to advise him.

This was Saul's offence, and that which aggravated it was, 1. That, for ought appears, he did not send any messenger to Samuel to know his mind, to represent the case to him, and to receive fresh directions from him, though he had enow about him that were swift enough of foot at this time. 2. That when Samuel came he rather seemed to boast of what he had done, than to repent of it; for he *went forth to salute him*, as his brother-sacrificer, and seemed pleased with the opportunity he had of letting Samuel know that he needed him not, but could do well enough without him. He went out to *bless him*, so the word is, as if he now thought himself a compleat priest, empowered to bless as well as sacrifice, whereas he should have gone out to be blessed by him. 3. That he charged Samuel with breach of promise, *Thou camest not within the days appointed*, *ver. 11.* and therefore if any thing were amiss, Samuel must bear the blame who was God's minister; whereas he did come according to his word, before the seven days were expired. Thus the *scoffers of the latter days* think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he doth not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time. 4. That when he was charged with disobedience he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance

penitance for it. It is not finning that ruins men, but finning and not repenting; falling and not getting up again. See what excuses he made, *ver. 11, 12.* He would have this act of disobedience pass, 1. For an instance of his prudence, the people were most of them scattered from him, and he had no other way but this to keep those with him that remained, and to prevent their deserting too. If Samuel neglected the publick concerns he would not. 2. For an instance of his piety: he would be thought very devout, and in great care not to engage the Philistines till he had by prayer and sacrifice engaged God on his side. *The Philistines (said he) will come down upon me, before I have made my supplication to the Lord,* and then I am undone. What! go to war before I have said my prayers! Thus he covered his disobedience to God's command, with a pretence of concern for God's favour. Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the *weightier matters of the law.* And yet, lastly, He owns it went against his conscience to do it, *I forced myself and offered a burnt-offering;* perhaps boasting that he had broke through his convictions and got the better of them; or, at least, thinking this extenuated his fault, that he knew he should not have done as he did, but did it with reluctance. Foolish man! to think that God would be well-pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command.

2. The sentence passed upon Saul for this offence: Samuel found him standing by his burnt-offering, but instead of an answer of peace was sent to him with heavy tidings, and let him know, that *the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord,* much more when he brings it, as Saul did, *with a wicked mind.* 1. He aggravates his crime; and saith to this king, *Thou art wicked;* which it is not for any but a prophet of the Lord to say, *Job xxxiv. 18.* He charges him with being an enemy to himself and his interest, *Thou hast done foolishly;* and a rebel to God and his government, *Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God,* that command wherewith he intended to try thy obedience. Note, Those that disobey the commandments of God do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools. 2. He reads his doom, *ver. 14. Thy kingdom shall not continue long to thee, or thy family;* God has his eye upon another, *a man after his own heart,* and not like thee, that will have thy own will and way. The sentence is, in effect, the same with *Mene, tekell.* Only now there seems room left for Saul's repentance, upon which this sentence should have been reversed; but upon the next act of disobedience it was made irreversible, *1 Sam. xv. 29.* And now, better a thousand times he had continued in obscurity tending his asses, than to be enthroned and so soon dethroned.

But was not this hard to pass so severe a sentence upon him and his house for a single error, and that seemed so small, and in excuse of which he had so much to say? No, *The Lord is righteous in all his ways,* and doth no man any wrong, *will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth.* By this, 1. He shews that there is no sin little, because no little god to sin against; but that every sin is a forfeiture of the heavenly kingdom, for which we stood fair. 2. He shews, that disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, is a great provocation; as in the case of our first parents. 3. He warns us to *take heed of our spirits,* for that which to men may seem but a small offence, yet to him that knows from what principle, and with what disposition of mind it is done, may appear a heinous crime. 4. God, in rejecting Saul, for an error seemingly little, as by a foil sets off the lustre of his mercy, in forgiving such great sins as those of David, Manasseh, and others. 5. We are taught hereby, how necessary it is that we *wait on our God continually.* Saul lost his kingdom for want of two or three hours patience.

15. And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal, unto Gibeah of Benjamin: and Saul numbred the people that were present with him, about six hundred men. 16. And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17. ¶ And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines, in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual. 18. And another company turned the way to Beth-horon: and another company turned to the way of the border, that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. 19. ¶ Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: (for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears) 20. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock. 21. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. 22. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was

there found. 23. And the garison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Here is, 1. Samuel gone in displeasure. Saul had set up for himself, and now he is left to himself; *Samuel gat him from Gilgal, ver. 15.* and it doth not appear, he either prayed with him, or directed him. Yet, in going up to Gibeah of Benjamin, which was Saul's city, he intimated, that he had not quite abandoned him, but waited there to do him a kindness another time. Or he went to the college of the prophets, there to pray for Saul, when he did not think fit to pray with him.

2. Saul goes after him to Gibeah, and there musters his army, and finds his whole numbers to be but six hundred men, *ver. 15, 16.* Thus were they for their sin *diminished and brought low.*

3. The Philistines ravaged the country, and put all the adjacent parts under contribution. The body of their army, or standing camp, as it is called in the margin, *ver. 23.* lay in an advantageous pass at Michmash, but thence they sent out three several parties or detachments that took several ways, to plunder the country, and bring in provisions for the army, *ver. 17, 18.* By these the land of Israel was both terrified and impoverished, and the Philistines animated and enriched. This the sin of Israel brought upon them, *Isa. xlii. 24.*

4. The Israelites that took the field with Saul were unarmed, had only slings and clubs, but not a sword or spear among them all, except what Saul and Jonathan themselves had, *ver. 19, 20, 21, 22.* See here, 1. How politick the Philistines were, when they had power in their hands, and did what they pleased in Israel, they put down all the smiths shops, transplanted the smiths into their own country, and forbade any Israelite, under severe penalties, to exercise the trade or mystery of working in brass or iron, though they had rich mines of both, *Deut. viii. 9,* in such plenty, that it was said of Asher, *his shoes shall be iron and brass,* *Deut. xxxiii. 25.* This was subtilly done of the Philistines, for hereby they not only prevented the people of Israel from making themselves weapons of war, by which they would be both disused to military exercises, and unfurnished when there was occasion, but obliged them to a dependence upon them, even for the instruments of husbandry; they must go to them, *i. e.* to some or other of their garisons, which were dispersed in the country, to have all their iron-work done, and no more might an Israelite do but use a file, *ver. 20, 21.* and no doubt the Philistine smiths brought the Israelites long bills for work done. 2. How impolitick Saul was, that did not in the beginning of his reign set himself to redress this grievance. Samuel's not doing it was very excusable, he fought with other artillery; thunder and lightning, in answer to his prayer, were to him instead of sword and spear; but for Saul, that pretended to be a king, like the kings of the nations, to leave his soldiers without swords and spears, and take no care to provide them, especially when he might have done it out of the spoils of the Ammonites, whom he conquered in the beginning of his reign, was such a piece of negligence, as could by no means be excused. 3. How slothful and mean-spirited the Israelites were, that suffered the Philistines thus to impose upon them, and had no thought nor spirit to help themselves. It was reckoned very bad with them, when there was *not a shield or spear found among forty thousand in Israel,* *Judg. v. 8.* and it was no better now, when there was never an Israelite with a sword by his side, but the king and his son; never a soldier, never a gentleman; sure they were reduced to this, or began to be so, in Sampson's time, for we never find him with sword or spear in his hand. If they had not been dispirited, they could not have been disarmed, but it was sin that made them naked to their shame.

C H A P. XIV.

We left the host of Israel in a very ill posture, in the close of the foregoing chapter; we saw in them neither wisdom, nor strength, nor goodness, to give us ground to expect any other, but that they should all be cut off by the army of the Philistines; yet here we find, that infinite power which works without means, and that infinite goodness which gives without merit, glorified in a happy turn to their affairs, that still Samuel's words may be made good, The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, chap. xii. 22. In this chapter we have, 1. The host of the Philistines trampled upon, and triumphed over, by the faith and courage of Jonathan, who, unknown to his father, ver. 1,—3. with his armour-bearer only, made a brave attack upon them, encouraging himself in the Lord his God, ver. 4,—7. Challenged them, ver. 8,—12. and, upon their acceptance of the challenge, charged them with such fury, or rather such faith, that he put them to flight, and set them one against another, ver. 13,—15. which gave opportunity to Saul and his forces, with other Israelites, to pursue the blow, and gain a victory, ver. 16,—23. 2. The host of Israel troubled and perplexed, by the rashness and folly of Saul, who adjured the people to eat no food till night; which (1.) Brought Jonathan into a pre-munire, ver. 24,—30. (2.) Was a temptation to the people, when the time of their fast was expired, to eat with the blood, ver. 31,—35. (3.) Jonathan's error, through ignorance, had like to have been his death, but the people rescued him, ver. 36,—46. 3. In the close we have a general account of Saul's exploits, ver. 47, 48. and of his family, ver. 49,—52.

1. **N**OW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines garison, that is on the other side: but he told not his father. 2. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under a pomegranate-tree, which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; 3. And Ahiah the son of Ahitub, I-chabods brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod: and the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4. And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines garison, there was a sharp rock on the one side: and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5. The forefront of the one was situate north-ward over against Michmash, and the other south-ward over against Gibeah. 6. And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD, to save by many or by few. 7. And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee, behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. 8. Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover our selves unto them. 9. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand; and this shall be a sign unto us. 11. And both of them discovered themselves unto the garison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes, where they had hid themselves. 12. And the men of the garison answered Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour-bearer, Come up after me; for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands, and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him. 14. And that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half-acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow. 15. And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

We must here take notice,

1. Of the goodness of God in restraining the Philistines, who had a vast army of stout men in the field, from falling upon that little handful of timorous trembling people that Saul had with him, whom they would easily have swallowed up at once. It is an invincible power that sets bounds to the malice of the church's enemies, and suffers them not to do that which we would think there is nothing to hinder them from.

2. Of the weakness of Saul, who seems here to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself.

1. He pitched his tent under a tree, and had but six hundred men with him, ver. 2. Where were now the three thousand men he had chosen, and put such a confidence in? chap. xiii. 2. Those, whom he trusted too much to, failed him when he most needed them. He durst not stay in Gibeah, but got into some obscure place, in the uttermost part of the city, under a pomegranate-tree, under Rimmon, so the word is, Ha-Rimmon, that Rimmon near Gibeah, in the caves of which these six hundred Benjamites, that escaped, hid themselves, Judg. xx. 47. Some think there Saul took shelter, so mean and abject was his spirit, now he was fallen under God's displeasure, every hour expecting the Philistines upon him, and thereby the accomplishment of Samuel's threatening, chap. xiii. 14. Those can never think themselves safe, that see themselves cast out of God's protection.

2. Now he sent for a priest, and the ark; a priest from Shiloh, and the ark from Kirjath-jearim, ver. 3, 18. Saul had done ill to offer sacrifice himself, chap. xiii. 9. now he resolves never to fall into that error again, and therefore sends for a priest, and hopes to compromise the matter with God Almighty by a partial reformation, as many do whose hearts are unhumbled and unchanged. Samuel the Lord's prophet had forsaken him, but he thinks he can make up that loss, by commanding Ahiah the Lord's priest to attend him, and he will not make him stay for him, nor reprove

him, as Samuel had done, but will do just as he bids him, ver. 18, 19. Many love to have such ministers that will be what they would have them be, and prophesy smooth things to them; and their carefessing them because they are priests, they hope will atone for their enmity to those ministers that deal faithfully and plainly with them. He will also have the ark brought, perhaps, to upbraid Samuel, who, in the days of his government, for ought appears, had not made any publick use of it; or in hopes that that would make up the deficiency of his forces; one would think, they should never have brought the ark into the camp again, since the last time, when it not only did not save them, but did it self fall into the Philistines hands: But it is common for those that have lost the substance of religion, to be most fond of the shadows of it, as here is a deserted prince courting a deserted priest.

3. Of the bravery and piety of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was much fitter than the father to wear the crown. A sweet imp (saith bishop Hall) out of a crab-stock.

1. He resolved to go incognito into the camp of the Philistines; did not acquaint his father with his design, for he knew he would forbid him; nor the people, for he knew they would all discourage him; and because he resolved not to heed their objections, he resolved not to hear them, nor ask their advice, ver. 1, 3. Nor had he so great an opinion of the priest, as to consult him, but being conscious of a divine impulse putting him upon it, he threw himself into the mouth of danger, in hopes of doing service to his country. The way of access to the enemies camp is described, ver. 4, 5. to be highly difficult, and their natural entrenchments impregnable, yet that doth not discourage him; the strength and sharpness of the rock do but harden and whet his resolutions. Great and generous souls are animated by opposition, and take a pleasure in breaking through it.

2. He encouraged his armour-bearer, a young man that attended him, to go along with him in this daring enterprize, ver. 6. Come and let us put our lives in our hands, and go over to the enemy's garison, and try what we can do to put them into confusion. See whence he draws his encouragements. 1. They are uncircumcised, and have not the seal of the covenant in their flesh, as we have. Fear not, we shall do well enough with them, for they are not under the protection of God's covenant as we are, cannot call him theirs, as we can, by the sign of circumcision. If such as are enemies to us, are also strangers to God, we need not fear them. 2. God is able to make us two victorious over their unnumbered regiments. There is no restraint to the Lord, no limitation to the holy One of Israel, but it is all one to him, to save by many or by few. This is a truth easily granted in general, that it is all alike to omnipotence, what the instruments are by which it works; and yet, it is not so easy to apply it to a particular case; when we are but few and feeble, then to believe that God can not only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak, and hearten the heartless; let it be pleaded with God for the enforcing of our petitions, and with our selves for the silencing of our fears, It is nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. 3. Who knows, but he that can use us for his glory, will do it. It may be, the Lord will work for us, work with us, work a sign or miracle for us. So the Chaldee. We may encourage our selves with hope, that God will appear for us, though we have not ground on which to build an assurance. An active faith will venture far in God's cause upon an It may be.

His armour-bearer, or esquire, as if he had learned to carry, not his arms only, but his heart, promised to stand by him, and follow him, whithersoever he went, ver. 7. We have reason to think, Jonathan felt a divine impulse and impression, putting him upon this bold adventure, in which he was encouraged by his servant's concurrence, else the danger was so great which he ran upon, that he had rather tempted God, than trusted him. And, perhaps, he had an actual regard to that word of Joshua, chap. xxiii. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand, borrowed from Moses, Deut. xxxii. 30.

3. How bold soever his resolution was, he resolved to follow providence in the execution of it, which he believed would guide him with its eye, Psalm xxxii. 8. and which therefore he would carefully attend, and take hints of direction from. See, 1. How he put himself upon providence, and resolved to be determined by it. Come (saith he to his confident) we will discover to the enemy, as those that are not afraid to look them in the face, ver. 8. and then if they be so cautious, as to bid us stand, we will advance no further, taking that for an intimation of providence, that God would have us act defensively; and we will prepare, as well as we can, to give them a warm reception, ver. 9. but if they be so presumptuous, as to challenge us, and the first sentinel we meet with bids us march on, we will push forward, and make as brisk an onset, assuredly gathering from thence, that it is the will of God we should act offensively, and then, not doubting but he will stand by us, ver. 10. and upon this issue he puts it, firmly believing, as we all should, (1.) That God has the governing of the hearts and tongues of all men, even of those that know him not, nor have any regard to him, and serves his own purposes by them, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so. Jonathan knew God could discover his mind to him if he pleased, and would do it, since he depended

pended upon him, as surely by the mouth of a Philistine, as by the mouth of a priest. (2.) That God will, some way or other, direct the steps of those that *acknowledge him in all their ways*, and seek unto him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow his conduct. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected, but well observed, turns of providence.

4. Providence gave him the sign he expected, and he answered the signal. He and his armour-bearer did not surprize the Philistines when they were asleep, but discovered themselves to them by day-light, *ver. 11.* The guards of the Philistines, 1. Disdained them, upbraided them with the cowardise of many of their people, and looked upon them to be of the regiment of sneakers; *Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of their holes.* If some of Christ's soldiers play the coward, others that play the man, may, perhaps, be upbraided with it. 2. They defied them, *ver. 12. Come, and we will shew you a thing*; as if they came like children to gaze about them; but meaning, as Goliath, *chap. xvii. 44.* that they would give them as meat to the fowls of the air. They bantered them, not doubting but to make a prey of them. This greatly emboldened Jonathan. With it he encouraged his servant; he had spoken with uncertainty, *ver. 6. It may be the Lord will work for us*, but now with assurance, *ver. 12. The Lord has delivered them*, not into our hand, he fought not his own glory, but *into the hand of Israel*, for he aimed at nothing but the advantage of the publick. His faith being thus strengthened, no difficulty can stand before him, he climbs up the rock, upon all four, *ver. 13.* though he had nothing to cover him, nor any but his own servant to second him, nor any human probability of any thing but death before him.

5. The wonderful success of this daring enterprize. The Philistines, instead of falling upon Jonathan, to slay him, or take him prisoner, fell before him, *ver. 13.* unaccountably, upon the first blow he gave. They fell, *i. e.*

1. They were many of them slain by him and his armour-bearer, *ver. 14.* twenty Philistines fell presently; it was not so much the name of Jonathan that made them yield so tamely, though some think, that was become terrible to them, since he smote one of their garisons, *chap. xiii. 3.* but it was God's right hand, and his arm, that got him this victory.

2. The rest were put to flight, and fell foul upon one another, *ver. 15. There was trembling in the host.* There was no visible cause for fear, they were numerous, bold, and advantageously posted; the Israelites had fled before them, not an enemy made head against them, but one gentleman and his man, and yet they shook like an aspen leaf: the consternation was general, they all trembled, even the spoilers, those that had been most bold and forward, shaked in the common fright, the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another, and yet none of them could tell why, or wherefore; it is called a trembling of God, so the original phrase is, signifying, not only, as we render it, a very great trembling, which they could not resist, nor reason themselves clear of, but that it was supernatural, and came immediately from the hand of God. He that made the heart, knows how to make it tremble. To compleat the confusion, even the earth quaked, and made them ready to fear that it would sink under them. Those that will not fear the eternal God, he can make them afraid of a shadow. See *Prov. xxviii. 1. Isa. xxxiii. 14.*

16. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. 17. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were not there. 18. And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God: (for the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.) 19. ¶ And it came to pass while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on, and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. 20. And Saul and all the people that were with him, assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and behold, every mans sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. 21. Moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites, that were with Saul and Jonathan. 22. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23. So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

We have here the prosecution and improvement of the wonderful advantage, which Jonathan and his armour-bearer gained against the Philistines.

1. The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. They melted away like snow before the sun, and went on beating down one another, *ver. 16.* for, *ver. 20. every man's sword was against his fellow.* When they fled for fear, instead of turning back upon those that chased them, they reckoned those only their enemies that stood in their way, and treated them accordingly. The Philistines were very secure, because all the swords and spears were in their hands, Israel had none, except what Saul and Jonathan had, but now God shewed them the folly of that confidence, by making their own swords and spears the instruments of their destruction, and more fatal in their own hands, than if they had been in the hands of Israel. See the like done, *Judg. vii. 22. 2 Chron. xx. 23.*

2. The Israelites were hereby animated against them.

1. Notice was soon taken of it by the watchmen of Saul, those that stood centinel at Gibeah, *ver. 16.* they were aware that the host of the enemy was in great confusion, and that a great slaughter was made among them, and yet upon search they found none of their own forces absent, but only Jonathan and his servant, *ver. 17.* which, no doubt, greatly animated them, and assured them, that it could be no other than the Lord's doing, when there was no more of man's doing than what those two could do against a great host.

2. Saul began to enquire of God, but soon desisted. His spirit was not come down so far, as to allow him to consult with Samuel, though, it is probable, he was near him, for we read, *chap. xiii. 15.* that he was come to Gibeah of Benjamin, but he called for the ark, *ver. 18.* desiring to know, whether it would be safe for him to attack the Philistines, upon the disorder they perceived them to be in: Many will consult God about their safety, that would never consult him about their duty. But perceiving by his scouts that the noise in the enemies camp increased, he commanded the priest that officiated, to break off abruptly, *withdraw thine hand*, *ver. 19.* consult no more, wait no longer for an answer: He was very unwise indeed, if (as some think) he forbade him to lift up his hands in prayer, for when Joshua was actually engaged with Amalek, Moses continued still to lift up his hands: It is rather a prohibition to his enquiring of the Lord, either, 1. Because now he thought he did not need an answer, the case was plain enough. And yet the more evident it was that God did all, the more reason he had to enquire, whether he would give him leave to do any thing. Or, 2. Because now he would not stay for it; he was in such haste to fight a falling enemy, that he would not stay to make an end of his devotions, nor hear what answer God would give him. A little thing will divert a vain and carnal mind from religious exercises. He that believeth, will not make such haste as this, nor reckon any business so urgent, as not to allow him time to take God along with him.

3. He, and all the little force he had, made a vigorous attack upon the enemy; all the people were cried together, so the word is, *ver. 20.* for want of the silver trumpets, wherewith God appointed them to sound an alarm in the day of battle, *Numb. x. 9.* They summoned them together by shouting, and their number was not so great, but that they might soon be got together. And now they seem bold and brave, when the work is done to their hands. Our Lord Jesus has conquered our spiritual enemies, routed and dispersed them, so that we are cowards indeed, if we will not stand to our arms, when it is only to pursue the victory, and divide the spoil.

4. Every Hebrew, even those from whom one would least have expected it, now turned his hand against the Philistines. 1. Those that had deserted, and gone over to the enemy, and were among them, now fought against them, *ver. 21.* some think, they were such as had been taken prisoners by them, and now they were as goads in their sides: it rather seems, that they went in to them voluntarily, but, now they saw them falling, recovered the hearts of Israelites, and did valiantly for their country. 2. Those that had run their colours, and hid themselves in the mountains, returned to their posts, and joined in with the pursuers, *ver. 22.* hoping, by their great officiousness, now the danger was over, and the victory sure, to atone for their former cowardise. It was not much to their praise to appear now, but it would have been more their reproach, if they had not appeared. Those are remiss and faint-hearted indeed, that will not act in the cause of God, when they see it victorious, as well as righteous.

Thus all hands were at work against the Philistines, and every Israelite slew as many as he could, without sword or spear, yet it is said, *ver. 23. it was the Lord that saved Israel that day.* He did it by them, for without him they could do nothing. *Salvation is of the Lord.*

24. ¶ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until the evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies: so none of the people tasted any food. 25. And all they of the land came to a wood, and there was honey upon the ground. 26. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped, but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: where

wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipt it in an hony-comb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightned. 28. Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint. 29. Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightned, because I tasted a little of this hony: 30. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? 31. And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint. 32. And the people slew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood. 33. ¶ Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34. And Saul said, Disperse your selves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there. 35. And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

We have here an account of the distress of the children of Israel, even in the day of their triumphs. Such allays are all present joys subject to. And such obstructions doth many a good cause meet with, even then when it seems most prosperous, through the mismanagement of instruments.

1. Saul forbade the people, under the penalty of a curse, to taste any food that day, *ver. 24.* Here we will suppose, (1.) That as king, he had power to put his soldiers under this interdict, and to bind it on with a curse; and therefore they submitted to it, and God so far owned it, as to discover, by the lot, that Jonathan was the delinquent that had meddled with the accursed thing, though ignorantly, for which God would not be at that time enquired of by them. (2.) That he did it with a good intention, lest the people, who, perhaps, had been kept for some time at short allowance, when they found plenty of victuals in the deserted camp of the Philistines, should fall greedily upon that, and so lose time in pursuing the enemy, and some of them, it may be, glut themselves to that degree, as not to be fit for any more service that day. To prevent this, he forbade them to taste any food, and laid himself, it is likely, under the same restraint. And yet his making this severe order was, 1. Impolitick, and very unwise; for if it gained time, it lost strength for the pursuit. 2. It was imperious, and disobliging to the people, and worse than *muzzling the mouth of the ox, when he treads out the corn.* To forbid them to feast had been commendable, but to forbid them so much as to taste, though they were never so hungry, was barbarous. 3. It was impious, to enforce the prohibition with a curse and an oath. Had he no penalty less than an anathema, wherewith to support his military discipline? Death for such a crime had been too much, but especially death with a curse. Though superiors may chide and correct, they may not curse their inferiors; our rule is, *Bless, and curse not.* When David speaks of an enemy he had that loved cursing, perhaps, he meant Saul, *Psal. cix. 17, 18.*

2. The people observed his order, but it had many inconveniences attending it, 1. The soldiers were tantalized; for, in their pursuit of the enemy, it happened they went through a wood so full of wild hony, that it dropped from the trees upon the ground, the Philistines having, perhaps, in their flight, broke in upon the hony-combs, for their own refreshment, and left them running. Canaan flowed with hony, and here is an instance of it. They sucked hony out of *the rock, the flinty rock,* Deut. xxxii. 13. yet for fear of the curse, they did not so much as taste the hony, *ver. 25, 26.* Those are worthy the name of Israelites, that can deny themselves and their own appetites, even then, when they are most craving, and the delights of sense most tempting, for fear of guilt and a curse, and the table becoming a snare. Let us never feed our selves, much less feast our selves, without fear. 2. Jonathan fell under the curse through ignorance. He heard not of the charge his father had given for having bravely forced the lines, he was then following the chase, and therefore might justly be looked upon as exempted from the charge, and not intended in it. But it seems it was taken for granted, and he himself did not object against it afterwards, that it extended to him, though absent upon so good an occasion. He, not knowing any peril in it, took up a piece of a hony-comb, upon the end of his staff, and sucked it, *ver. 27.* and was sensibly refreshed by it, *his eyes were enlightned,* which began to grow dim through hun-

ger and faintness; it made his countenance look pleasant and cheerful, for it was such as a stander-by might discern, *ver. 29. See how mine eyes have been enlightned.* He thought no harm, nor feared any, till one of the people acquainted him with the order, and then he found himself in a snare. Many a good son has been thus entangled and distressed, more ways than one, by the rashness of an inconsiderate father: Jonathan, for his part, lost the crown he was heir to, by his father's folly, which, it may be, this was an ill omen of. 3. The soldiers were fainty, and grew feeble, in the pursuit of the Philistines. Jonathan foresaw this would be the effect of it, their spirits would flag, and their strength would fail, for want of sustenance. Such is the nature of our bodies, that they soon grow unfit for service, if they be not supplied with fresh recruits. Daily work cannot be done without daily bread, which therefore our Father in heaven graciously gives us. It is *bread* that *strengthens man's heart*; therefore Jonathan reasoned very well, *if the people had eaten freely,* there had been a much greater slaughter, *ver. 30.* but, as it was, they were *very faint, too much fatigued,* so the Chaldee, and began to think more of their meat than of their work. 4. The worst effect of all was, that at evening, when the restraint was taken off, and they returned to their food again, they were so greedy and eager upon it, that they eat the flesh with the blood, expressly contrary to the law of God, *ver. 32.* two hungry meals, we say, make the third a glutton; it was so here. They would not stay to have their meat either duly killed, for they slew them upon the ground, and did not hang them up, as they used to do, that the blood might all run out of them, or duly dressed, but fell greedily upon it, before it was half boiled, or half roasted, *ver. 32.* Saul being informed of it, reproved them for the sin, *ver. 34.* *Ye have transgressed,* but did not, as he should have done, reflect upon himself as having been accessary to it, and having *made the Lord's people to transgress.* To put a stop to this irregularity, Saul ordered them to set up a great stone before him, and let all that had cattle to kill, for their present use, bring them thither, and kill them under his eye, upon that stone, *ver. 33.* and the people did so, *ver. 34.* so easily were they restrained and reformed, when their prince took care to do his part. If magistrates would but use their power as they might, people would be made better than they are, with more ease than is imagined. Lastly, On this occasion Saul built an altar, *ver. 35.* that he might offer sacrifices, either by way of acknowledgment of the victory they had obtained, or by way of atonement for the sin they had been guilty of. *The same was the first altar that he built,* and, perhaps, the rolling of the great stone to kill the beasts on, minded him of converting it into an altar, else he had not thought of it. Saul was turning aside from God, and yet now he begins to build altars, being most zealous (as many are) for the form of godliness, then, when he was denying the power of it. See *Hosea viii. 14. Israel has forgotten his maker, and buildeth temples.* Some read it, *he began to build that altar*; he laid the first stone, but so hasty to pursue his victory, that he could not stay to finish it.

36. ¶ And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37. And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38. And Saul said, Draw ye near hither all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. 39. For as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people that answered him. 40. Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41. Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little hony with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, and lo I must die. 44. And Saul answered, God do so, and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45. And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46. Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

Here is, 1. Saul's speaking big against the Philistines; he proposed, as soon as his soldiers had got their suppers, to pursue them all night,

night, and *not leave a man of them*, ver. 36. Here he shewed much zeal, but little discretion, for his army thus fatigued, could as ill want a nights sleep, as a meals meat. But it is common for rash and foolish men, to consider no body but themselves, and, so they may but have their humour, care not what hardships they put upon those that are under them. However, his people were so obsequious to their king, that they would by no means oppose the motion, but resolved to make the best of it, and, if he will go on, they will follow him. *Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee*. Only the priest thought it convenient to go on with the devotions that were broken off abruptly, ver. 19. and to consult the oracle, *Let us draw near hither unto God*. Princes, and great men, have need of such about them, as will thus be their remembrancers, wherever they go, to take God along with them. And when the priest proposed it, Saul could not, for shame, reject the motion, but *asked counsel of God*, ver. 37. *Shall I go down after the Philistines?* And shall I speed?

2. His falling foul on his son Jonathan; and the rest of this paragraph is wholly concerning him; for while he is prosecuted, the Philistines make their escape. We know not what mischief may ensue one rash resolve.

1. God, by giving him an intimation of his displeasure, put Saul upon searching for an accursed thing. When, by the priest, he consulted the oracle, *God answered him not*, ver. 37. Note, When God denies our prayers, it concerns us to enquire what the sin is that hath provoked him to do so. *Let us see where the sin is*, ver. 38. for God's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but it is sin that separates between us and him. If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some iniquity regarded in our hearts, which we are concerned to find out, that we may put it away, may mortify it, and put it to death. Saul swears by his maker, that whoever was the Achan that troubled the camp, by eating the forbidden fruit, should certainly die, though it were Jonathan himself, *i. e.* though never so dear to himself, and the people, little thinking that Jonathan was the man, ver. 39. *He shall surely die*, the curse shall be executed upon him. But none of the people answered him, *i. e.* none of those who knew Jonathan had broke the order, would inform against him.

2. Jonathan was discovered by lot to be the offender. Saul would have lots cast between himself and Jonathan on the one side, and the people on the other, perhaps, because he was as confident of Jonathan's innocency in this matter, as of his own, ver. 40. The people seeing him in a heat, durst not gainsay any thing he proposed, but acquiesced, *Do as seemeth good unto thee*. Before he cast lots, he prayed that *God would give a perfect lot*, ver. 41. *i. e.* make a full discovery of this matter, or, as it is in the margin, that he would shew the innocent. This was with an air of impartial justice. Judges should desire that truth may come out, whoever may suffer by it. Lots should be cast with prayer, because they are a solemn appeal to providence, and by them we beg of God to direct and determine us, *Acts* i. 24. for which reason some have condemned games, that depend purely upon lot or chance, as making too bold with a sacred thing. Jonathan at length was taken, ver. 42. Providence designing hereby to countenance and support a lawful authority, and to put an honour upon the administration of publick justice in general, reserving another way to bring off one that had done nothing worthy of death.

3. Jonathan ingenuously confesseth the fact, and Saul, with an angry curse, passeth sentence upon him. Jonathan denies not the truth, nor goes about to conceal it; only he thinks it hard that he must *die for it*, ver. 43. He might very fairly have pleaded his invincible ignorance of the law, or have insisted upon his merit, but he submitted to the necessity with a great and generous mind, God's and his father's will be done: thus he shewed as much valour in receiving the messengers of death himself, as in sending them among the Philistines. It is as brave to yield in some cases, as it is in other cases to fight. Saul is not mollified by his filial submission, nor the hardness of his case, but as one that affected to be thought firm to his word, and much more to his oath, even then, when it bound him hardest, with another imprecation he gives judgment upon Jonathan. ver. 44. *God do so and more also to me*, if I do not execute the law upon thee, *for thou shalt surely die Jonathan*. 1. He pass this sentence too hastily, without consulting the oracle; Jonathan had a very good plea in arrest of the judgment; what he had done was not *malum in se*; and for the prohibition of it, he was ignorant of that, so that he could not be charged with rebellion or disobedience. 2. He did it in fury. Had Jonathan been worthy to die, yet it had become a judge, much more a father, to pass sentence with tenderness and compassion, and not with such an air of triumph, like a man perfectly divested of all humanity, and natural affection. Justice is debased, when it is administered with wrath and bitterness. 3. He backed it with a curse upon himself, if he did not see the sentence executed; and this curse did return upon his own head; Jonathan escaped, but God did so to Saul, and more also; for he was rejected of God, and made an anathema. Let none, upon any occasion, dare to use such imprecations as these, lest God say Amen to them, and *make their own tongues to fall upon them*, *Psal.* lxxiv. 8. He that rolleth this stone, it will return upon him. Yet we have reason to think, that Saul's bowels yerned towards Jonathan, so that he really punished himself, and very justly,

when he seemed so severe upon Jonathan; God made him feel the smart of his own rash edict, which might make him fear being again guilty of the like. By all these vexatious accidents, God did likewise correct him for his presumption, in offering sacrifice without Samuel. An expedition so ill begun, could not end without some rebukes.

4. The people rescued Jonathan out of his father's hands, ver. 45. Hitherto they had expressed themselves very observant of Saul, what seemed good to him they acquiesced in, ver. 36, 40. but when Jonathan is in danger, Saul's word is no longer a law to them, but with the utmost zeal they oppose the execution of his sentence, *Shall Jonathan die?* That blessing, that darling of his country. Shall that life be sacrificed to a punctilio of law and honour, which was so bravely exposed for the publick service, and to which we owe our lives and triumphs? No, we will never stand by and see him thus treated, whom God delights to honour. It is good to see Israelites zealous for the protection of those whom God has made instruments of publick good. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should die, but they oppose their oath to his, and swear he shall not die; *As the Lord liveth, there shall not only not his head, but not a hair of his head fall to the ground*; they did not rescue him by violence, but by reason and resolution; and Josephus saith, they made their prayer to God, that he might be loosed from the curse. They plead for him, that *he hath wrought with God this day*; *i. e.* he has owned God's cause, and God has owned his endeavours, and therefore his life is too precious to be thrown away upon a nicety. We may suppose, Saul had not so perfectly forgot the relation of a father, but that he was willing enough to have Jonathan rescued, and well pleased to have that done, which yet he would not do himself: and he that knows the heart of a father, knows not how to blame him.

Lastly, The design against the Philistines is quashed by this ruffle, ver. 26. *Saul went up from following them*, and so an opportunity was lost of completing the victory. When Israel's shields are clashing with one another, the publick safety and service suffers by it.

47. ¶ So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. 49. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50. And the name of Sauls wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner the son of Ner, Sauls uncle. 51. And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. 52. And there was fore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp.

1. Of his court and family. The names of his sons and daughters, ver. 49. and of his wife, and his cousin-german, that was general of his army, ver. 50. There is mention of another wife of Saul's, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 8. Rizpah, a secondary wife, and of children he had by her.

2. Of his camp and military actions. 1. How he levied his army, *when he saw any strong valiant man*, that was remarkably fit for service, *he took him unto him*, ver. 52. as Samuel had told them the manner of the king would be, *chap.* viii. 11. and if he must have a standing army, it was his prudence to fill it up with the ablest men he could make choice of. 2. How he employed his army; he guarded his country against the insults of its enemies on every side, and prevented their incursions, ver. 47, 48. It is supposed, he acted only defensively against those that used to invade the borders of Israel; and whithersoever he turned himself, as there was occasion, *he vexed them*, by checking and disappointing them. But the enemies he struggled most with, were the Philistines, with them he had *fore war all his days*, ver. 52. He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbours cause to envy him, for he had little enjoyment of himself after he took the kingdom. He could not vex his enemies without some vexation to himself, such thorns are crowns quilted with.

CHAP. XV.

In this chapter we have the final rejection of Saul from being king, for his disobedience to God's command, in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By his wars and victories, he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but, by his mismanagement of them, he ruined himself, and laid his honour in the dust. Here is, 1. The commission God gave him to destroy the Amalekites, with a command to do it utterly, ver. 1,—3. 2. Saul's preparation for this

expedition, ver. 4,—6. 3. *His success, and partial execution of this commission*, ver. 7,—9. 4. *His examination before Samuel, and sentence past upon him, notwithstanding the many frivolous pleas he made to excuse himself*, ver. 10,—31. 5. *The slaying of Agag*, ver. 32, 33. 6. *Samuel's final farewell to Saul*, ver. 34, 35.

1. **S**AMUEL also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. 2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. 3. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 4. And Saul gathered the people together and numbred them in Telaim two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. 6. ¶ And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Here, 1. Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates, that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or no, ver. 1. And the making of this so expressly the trial of his obedience, did very much aggravate his disobedience. 1. He minds him of what God had done for him. *The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be a king.* God gave thee thy power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause, and avenge their quarrels. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel, and must be commanded by him. Men's preferment, instead of discharging them from their obedience to God, obligeth them so much the more to it. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be sent with these orders to him. 2. He tells him in general, that in consideration of this, whatever God commanded him to do, he was bound to do it. *Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord.* Note, God's favours to us, lay strong obligations upon us, to be obedient to him. This we must render, *Psalms cxvi. 12.*

2. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now shew his obedience to God, more than in any thing he had done yet. Samuel promisseth God's authority to the command, *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts; he also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard, *I remember that which Amalek did to Israel*, ver. 2. God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt; we have the story, *Exod. xvii. 8.* and the crime is aggravated, *Deut. xxv. 18.* he basely smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God; God then swore, that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and that in process of time, he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek; this is the work that Saul is now appointed to do, ver. 3. *Go and smite Amalek.* Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full, now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation. He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, both man and woman, infant and suckling, and not spare them out of pity; ox and sheep, camel and ass, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note, 1. Injuries done to God's Israel, will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them, when they are coming out of Egypt. 2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence past, is not executed speedily. 3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompence for the controversy of Israel will come at last. Though divine justice strikes slow, it strikes sure. 4. The longer judgment is delayed, many times the more severe it is when it comes. 5. God chuseth out instruments to do his work, that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul must do it, that was a rough and severe man.

3. Saul hereupon musters his forces and makes a descent upon the country of Amalek: it was a brave army that he brought into the

field, ver. 4. *Two hundred thousand footmen.* When he was to engage the Philistines and the success was hazardous, he had but six hundred attending him, chap. xiii. 15. but now he was to attack the Amalekites, by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But whatever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah that their forces were numbred by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short, look what was the reason, but a twentieth part of the whole, for they were but ten thousand, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field two hundred thousand. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but was not yet come. Saul numbred them in Telaim, which signifies lambs. He numbred them like lambs, so the vulgar Latin; numbred them by the paschal lambs, so the Chaldee, allowiog ten to a lamb, a way of numbring used by the Jews in the later times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the city of Amalek, that city that was their metropolis, ver. 5. that he might provoke them to give him battle.

4. He gave a friendly advice to the Kenites, to separate themselves from the Amalekites, among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, ver. 6. herein he did prudently and piously, and, it is probable, according to the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy to them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated; many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for they put their nest in a rock, hardy people that could live any where, and affected fastnesses, *Numb. xxiv. 21.* Baalam had there foretold, that they should be wasted, ver. 22. however, Saul must not waste them. But, 1. He acknowledgeth the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and this is remembered to their posterity many ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children, those that come after us may be reaping the benefit of our good works when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindnesses shewn to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, and recompenced in the resurrection of the just: *I was a hungry and ye gave me meat.* God's remembring the kindness of the Kenites ancestors, in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done to the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns. He espouseth his peoples cause, so as to bless those that bless them; and therefore so as to curse those that curse them, *Numb. xxiv. 9.* *Gen. xii. 3.* They cannot requite the kindnesses, nor avenge the injuries done them themselves, but God will do both. 2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites: *Go, depart, get you down from among them.* When destroying judgments are abroad, God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is dangerous being found in the company of God's enemies, and our duty and interest to come out from among them, lest we share in their sins and plagues, *Rev. xviii. 4.* The Jews have a saying, *Wo to the wicked man, and wo to his neighbour.*

5. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condemned malefactors, than a war with contending enemies; the issue could not be dubious when the cause was just, and the call so clear; *He smote them*, ver. 7. *utterly destroyed them*, ver. 8. Now they paid dear for the sin of their ancestors; God sometimes lays up iniquity for the children. They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to fall under the wrath of God; yet when God would reckon with them, he fastned upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel, as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, How unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestible is thy righteousness!

6. Yet he did his work by the halves, ver. 9. 1. He spared Agag, because he was a king like himself, and, perhaps, in hope to get a great ransom for him. 2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this, but that could not be helped; it was Saul's fault that he did not destroy such as came to his hands, and were in his power. That which was now destroyed, was in effect sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth, and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields, and his own table the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

10. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. 12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to

to Carmel, and behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, *Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.* 14. And Samuel said, *What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?* 15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18. And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21. But the people took of the spoil, and sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams. 23. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath rejected thee from being king.

Saul is here called to account by Samuel, concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God, and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

1. What passed between God and Samuel in secret upon this occasion, *ver. 10, 11.* (1.) God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.* Repentance in God is not as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method, or dispensation. He doth not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul, *he is turned back from following me*; this construction God put upon the partiality of his Obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom, and the honour and power that belonged to it; but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; those gifts and callings of God are without repentance. (2.) Samuel laments and deprecates it. *It grieved Samuel* that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off, and he *cried unto the Lord all night*, spent a whole night in interceding for him, that this decree might not go forth against him. When others were in their beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government: nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been, that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but, on the contrary, prayed earnestly for his establishment; so far was he from desiring that woful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people: God delights not in their death, nor should we.

2. What passed between Samuel and Saul in publick. Samuel being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, in *bitterness of soul*, to meet him; perhaps, according to an appointment, when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul was come to Gilgal, *ver. 13.* the place where he was made king, *chap. xi. 14.* and where now he had been confirmed, if he had approved himself well in this trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had (1.) Set him up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or *band*, as the word is) for himself: he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God, than boasting of his victory. (2.) That he was marched in great state to Gilgal, for that seems to be intimated in the manner of expression, he is *gone about*, and *passed on*, and *gone down*, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting.

1. Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself, *ver. 13.*

Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sentest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and *I have performed the commandment of the Lord.* It is very likely, if his conscience had not flown in his face at this time and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his obedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being *judged of the Lord*, whereas the only way to do that is by *judging our selves.* They that brag most of their religion, may justly be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

2. Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? *What means then the bleating of the sheep?* *ver. 14.* Saul would needs have it thought, that God Almighty was wonderfully beholden to him for the good service he had done; but Samuel shews him, that God was so far from being a debtor to him, that he had just cause of action against him, and produceth for evidence the *bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen*, which, perhaps, Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appeals to them as witnesses against him; he need not go far to disprove him. The noise the cattle made, like the *rust of the silver*, *Jam. v. 3.* would be a *witness against him.* Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites, to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God, but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them.

3. Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, *ver. 15.* The fact he cannot deny, the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But 1. It was not his fault, for *the people spared them*, as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves, are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any, rather than take it to themselves. Sin is a brat that no body cares to have laid at their doors. It is the sorry subterfuge of an impenitent heart that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame on those that were either tempters, or partners, or only followers in it. 2. It was with a good intention: It was *to sacrifice to the Lord thy God*: he is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this is, for his honour. This was a false plea, for both Saul and the people designed their own profit in sparing the cattle: But if it had been true, it had been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering; God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself hath prescribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

4. Samuel over-rules, or rather over-looks his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premiseth his authority; what he was about to say was what the Lord had said to him, *ver. 16.* otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain their ministers are too harsh with him, should remember, that while they keep to the word of God they are but messengers, and must say as they are bidden; and therefore be willing, as Saul himself here was, that they should *say on*; he delivers his message faithfully, 1. He minds him of the honour God had done him in making him king, *ver. 17. when he was little in his own sight.* God regarded the lowliness of his state, and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth ought oft to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that has advanced them. 2. He lays before him the plainness of the orders he was to execute, *ver. 18. The Lord sent thee on a journey*, so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather to be called a journey than a war, the work was honourable, to destroy the sworn enemies of God and Israel, and had he denied himself and set aside the consideration of his own profit, so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he should be no loser by it at last, nor go this *warfare on his own charges*; God would, no doubt, have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore, 3. He shews him how inexcusable he was in aiming to make a hand of this expedition, and to enrich himself by it, *ver. 19. Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil*, and convert that to thine own use which was to have been destroyed for God's honour? See what evil the love of money is the root of, but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord, it is disobedience; *thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord.*

5. Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, *ver. 20, 21.* he denies the charge, *ver. 20. Yea, I have obeyed*, I have done all I should do, for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself; God bid him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience, that he had brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists

insists upon it that he has *utterly destroyed the Amalekites* themselves, which was the main thing intended : but as to the spoil, he owns it should have been *utterly destroyed* ; so that he knew his *Lord's will*, and was under no mistake about the command : but he thought that would be wilful waste, the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time, *Numb. xxxi. 32.* and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now ? Better it should be a prey to the Israelites, than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts ; and therefore he connived at the people in carrying it away ; but it was their doing and not his, and besides, it was for *sacrifice to the Lord* here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience of their sin, and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

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2. That nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called *rebellion* and *stubbornness*, and is said to be as bad as *witchcraft* and *idolatry*, *ver. 23.* It is as bad to set up other gods, as to live in disobedience to the true God. They that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations, in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the *Teraphim* (as the word here is for idolatry) or the diviners. It was disobedience that made us all sinners, *Rom. v. 19.* and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the *transgression of the law*, and consequently it is *enmity to God*, *Rom. viii. 7.* Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God that this text speaks of.

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24. ¶ And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned : for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words : because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. 26. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee : for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 27. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou. 29. And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent : for he *is* not a man that he should repent. 30. Then he said, I have sinned ; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. 31. So Samuel turned again after Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of a penitent ; but it is too evident, that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed.

Observe, 1. How poorly he expressed his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed ; that touched him in a tender part, then he began to relent, and not till then ; when Samuel told him he was *rejected from being king*, then he said, *I have sinned*, No. 21.

ver. 24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous, but extorted by the rack, and forced from him.

Several ill signs here are of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of a bribe to him, he puts it into his confession, *I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word ;* as if he had been in God's stead, *ver. 24.* David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet in his confession has his eye to God alone ; not to Nathan, *Psal. li. 4. Against thee, thee only have I sinned ;* but Saul ignorantly enough confesseth his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word ; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the *commandment of the Lord.* He also addresseth to Samuel for forgiveness, *ver. 25. I pray thee, pardon my sin,* as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves who when they are fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the shews and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul here, is to suppose, that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him ; however, it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent, *ver. 24. I did it, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.* We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doings, and not the peoples ; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them, and did not stand in awe of them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous, whatever he pretended he did not really fear the people ; but it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove ; but they forget that God searcheth the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him, therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness, *ver. 25. to turn again with him, and assist in a publick thanksgiving for the victory ;* very importunate he was in this matter when he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle to detain him, *ver. 27. not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared if Samuel forsook him the people would do so too.* Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people, only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said, *ver. 30. I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people.* Is this the language of a penitent ? No, but the contrary, *I have sinned, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can loath me so much as I loath my self.* Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul. It is very common for those who are convicted of sin, to shew themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent, can pretend to no other but that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

2. How little he got by these thin shews of repentance. What point did he gain by them ?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence past upon him, so far was he from giving him any hopes of the repeal of it, *ver. 26. the same with ver. 23. He that covers his sins shall never prosper,* Prov. xxviii. 13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but *turned about to go away*, *ver. 27.* As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected, as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory, which was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterwards he did turn again with him, *vers 31. upon further thoughts, and probably, by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people, or, perhaps, not to do honour to Saul, (for though Saul worshipped the Lord, ver. 31. it is not said Samuel presided in that worship) but to do justice on Agag, ver. 32.*

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him he tore his clothes to detain him, *ver. 27. so loath was he to part with the prophet ; but Samuel put a construction upon this accident which none but a prophet could do, he made it to signify the rending of the kingdom from him, ver. 28. and that, like this, was his own doings.* He hath rent it from thee, and *given it to a neighbour better than thou*, viz. to David, who afterwards, upon an occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5. upon which Saul said, *ver. 20. I know that thou shalt surely be king,* perhaps, remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible, *ver. 29. The strength of Israel will not lie : The eternity, or victory of Israel, so some read it ; the holy One, so the Arabick ; the most noble One, so the Syriac ; the triumphant king of Israel, so bishop Patrick ;*

to Carmel, and behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, *Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.* 14. And Samuel said, *What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?* 15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17. And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18. And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21. But the people took of the spoil, and sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice; *and* to hearken, than the fat of rams. 23. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry: because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath rejected thee from *being* king.

Saul is here called to account by Samuel, concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God, and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

1. What passed between God and Samuel in secret upon this occasion, *ver. 10, 11.* (1.) God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.* Repentance in God is not as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method, or dispensation. He doth not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul, *he is turned back from following me*; this construction God put upon the partiality of his Obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom, and the honour and power that belonged to it; but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; those gifts and callings of God are without repentance. (2.) Samuel laments and deprecates it. *It grieved Samuel* that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off, and he *cried unto the Lord all night*, spent a whole night in interceding for him, that this decree might not go forth against him. When others were in their beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government: nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been, that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but, on the contrary, prayed earnestly for his establishment; so far was he from desiring that woful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people: God delights not in their death, nor should we.

2. What passed between Samuel and Saul in publick. Samuel being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, in *bitterness of soul*, to meet him; perhaps, according to an appointment, when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul was come to Gilgal, *ver. 13.* the place where he was made king, *chap. xi. 14.* and where now he had been confirmed, if he had approved himself well in this trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had (1.) Set him up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or *band*, as the word is) for himself: he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God, than boasting of his victory. (2.) That he was marched in great state to Gilgal, for that seems to be intimated in the manner of expression, he is *gone about*, and *passed on*, and *gone down*, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting.

1. Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself, *ver. 13.*

Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sentest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success; and *I have performed the commandment of the Lord.* It is very likely, if his conscience had not flown in his face at this time and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his obedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being *judged of the Lord*; whereas the only way to do that is by *judging our selves.* They that brag most of their religion, may justly be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

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ver. 24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous, but extorted by the rack, and forced from him.

Several ill signs here are of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of a bribe to him, he puts it into his confession, *I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word ;* as if he had been in God's stead, *ver. 24.* David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet in his confession has his eye to God alone ; not to Nathan, *Psal. li. 4. Against thee, thee only have I sinned ;* but Saul ignorantly enough confesseth his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word ; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the *commandment of the Lord.* He also addresseth to Samuel for forgiveness, *ver. 25. I pray thee, pardon my sin,* as if any could forgive sin but God only, Those wretchedly deceive themselves who when they are fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the shews and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul here, is to suppose, that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him ; however, it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent, *ver. 24. I did it, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.* We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doings, and not the peoples ; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them, and did not stand in awe of them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous, whatever he pretended he did not really fear the people ; but it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove ; but they forget that God searcheth the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him, therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness, *ver. 25. to turn again with him, and assist in a publick thanksgiving for the victory ;* very importunate he was in this matter when he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle to detain him, *ver. 27. not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared if Samuel forsook him the people would do so too.* Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people, only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said, *ver. 30. I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people.* Is this the language of a penitent ? No, but the contrary, *I have sinned, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can loath me so much as I loath myself.* Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul. It is very common for those who are convicted of sin, to shew themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent, can pretend to no other but that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

2. How little he got by these thin shews of repentance. What point did he gain by them ?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence past upon him, so far was he from giving him any hopes of the repeal of it, *ver. 26. the same with ver. 23. He that covers his sins shall never prosper,* *Prov. xxviii. 13.* Samuel refused to turn back with him, but *turned about to go away,* *ver. 27.* As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected, as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory, which was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterwards he did turn again with him, *vers 31. upon further thoughts, and probably, by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people, or, perhaps, not to do honour to Saul, (for though Saul worshipped the Lord, ver. 31. it is not said Samuel presided in that worship) but to do justice on Agag, ver. 32.*

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him he tore his clothes to detain him, *ver. 27. so loath was he to part with the prophet ; but Samuel put a construction upon this accident which none but a prophet could do, he made it to signify the rending of the kingdom from him, ver. 28. and that, like this, was his own doings.* He hath rent it from thee, and *given it to a neighbour better than thou,* viz. to David, who afterwards, upon an occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, *1 Sam. xxiv. 5.* upon which Saul said, *ver. 20. I know that thou shalt surely be king,* perhaps, remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible, *ver. 29. The strength of Israel will not lie :* The eternity, or victory of Israel, so some read it ; the holy One, so the Arabick ; the most noble One, so the Syriac ; the triumphant king of Israel, so bishop Patrick ;

trick; he is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose: *He is not a man that he should repent.* Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes, something happens which they could not foresee, by which their measures are broke; but with God it is neither so, nor so. God hath sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done upon the sinner's repenting; but here repentance was hid from Saul, and therefore hid from God's eyes.

32. ¶ Then said Samuel, Bring you hither to me Agag king of the Amalekites: and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34. ¶ Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, *Jer. i. 10.*

1. He destroys king Agag, doubtless by such special direction from heaven, as none now can pretend to. He *hewed Agag in pieces*: some think he only ordered it to be done; or, perhaps he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice, *ver. 33.* and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this.

(1.) How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated. He *came delicately*, in a stately manner, to shew that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect; or, in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that *could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy*, *Deut. xxxiii. 56.* to move compassion: and he said, surely now the heat of the battle is over, *the bitterness of death is past*, *ver. 32.* having escaped the sword of Saul, that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, an old prophet, a man of peace. Note 1. There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. *Surely death is bitter*, so divers Versions read those words of Agag; as the Seventy read the former clause, *He came trembling*: death will dismay the stoutest heart. 2. Many think the bitterness of death is past when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them which is very near. True believers may, through grace, say this upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is, *O death where is thy sting!*

(2.) How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins, *thy fathers have made women childless*, *ver. 33.* He trod in the steps of his ancestor's cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek required of this generation, *Matt. xxiii. 36.* Agag that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others: it is commonly so, those that are indulgent of their appetites are no less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for, even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed, or cause to be shed. It was that crime of king Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, *2 Kings xxiv. 4.* See *Rev. xiii. 10.*

2. He deserts king Saul, takes leave of him, *ver. 34.* and *never came any more to see him*, *ver. 35.* to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company, nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him: though he might sometimes see him accidentally, as *chap. xix. 24.* yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he *mourned for Saul*, thinking it a very lamentable thing, that a man who stood so fair for great things, should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the ill state of the country, to which Saul was likely to have been so great a blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance: when he wept for him it is likely he made supplication, but the Lord had repented that he had made Saul king, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, we must mourn for the rejection of sinners, 1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to *weep day and night for them*, *Jer. ix. 1, 2.* 2. Though they do not mourn for themselves. Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure he was under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.

C H A P. XVI.

At this chapter begins the story of David, one that makes as great a figure in the sacred story, as almost any of the worthies of the Old Testament: one that both with his sword and with his pen served the honour of God and the interests of Israel, as much as most ever did, and was as illustrious a type of Christ. Here, 1. Samuel is

appointed and commissioned to anoint a king among the sons of Jesse at Beth-lehem, ver. 1,—5. 2. All his elder sons are passed by, and David the youngest is pitched upon and anointed, ver. 6,—13. 3. Saul growing melancholy David is pitched upon by Musick to relieve him, ver. 14,—23. Thus small are the beginnings of that great man.

1. **A**ND the LORD said to Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oyl, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. 2. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. 3. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee. 4. And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem: and the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5. And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify your selves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel was retired to his own house in Ramah, with a resolution not to appear any more in publick business, but to addict himself wholly to the instructing and training up of the sons of the prophets, over whom he presided, as we find *chap. xix. 20.* he promised himself more satisfaction in young prophets than in young princes; and we do not find that, to his dying day, God called him out to any publick action relating to the state, but only here to anoint David.

1. God reproves him for continuing so long to mourn for the rejection of Saul. He doth not blame him for mourning on that occasion, but for exceeding in his sorrow, *How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?* *ver. 1.* We do not find that he mourned at all for the setting aside of his own family and the deposing his own sons; but for the rejecting of Saul and his seed he mourns without measure, for the former was done by the peoples foolish discontent, this by the righteous wrath of God. Yet he must find time to take up, and not go mourning to his grave, (1.) Because God has rejected him, and he ought to acquiesce in the divine justice, and forget his affection to Saul; if God will be glorified in his ruin, Samuel ought to be satisfied. Besides, to what purpose should he weep? The decree is gone forth, and all his prayers and tears cannot prevail for the reversing of it, *2 Sam. xii. 22, 23.* (2.) Because Israel shall be no loser by it, and Samuel must prefer the publick welfare before his own private affection to his friend. Mourn not for Saul, for I have provided me a king. The people provided them a king and he proved ill, now I will provide me one, *a man after my own heart.* See *Psal. lxxxix. 20. Acts xiii. 22.* If Saul be rejected, yet Israel shall not be *as sheep having no shepherd*; I have another in store for them, let thy joy of him swallow up thy grief for the abdicated prince.

2. He sends to Beth-lehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a person probably not unknown to Samuel. *Fill thine horn with oil.* Saul was anointed with a glass vial of oil, scanty and brittle, David with a horn of oil, which was more plentiful and durable; hence we read of a *horn of salvation in the house of his servant David*, *Luke i. 69.*

3. Samuel objects the peril of going on this errand, *ver. 2.* *If Saul hear it he will kill me.* By this it appears, (1.) That Saul was grown very wicked and outrageous since his rejection, else Samuel would not have mentioned this. What impiety would he not be guilty of, who durst kill Samuel? (2.) That Samuel's faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he had not thus feared the rage of Saul. Would not he that sent him protect him and bear him out? But the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be wholly cast out any where on this side heaven. But this may be understood as Samuel's desire of direction from heaven how to manage this matter prudently, so as not to expose himself, or any other more than needed.

4. God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice. Say, *I am come to sacrifice*, and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, *chap. xi. 15.* As a prophet he might sacrifice, when and where God appointed him; and it was not at all inconsistent with the laws of truth to say, he came to sacrifice, when really he did so, though he had also a further end, which he thought fit to conceal. Let him give notice of a sacrifice, and invite Jesse and his family, who, it is probable, was the principal man of the city, to come to the feast upon the sacrifice; and, saith God, *I will shew thee what thou shalt do.* Those that go about God's work, in God's way, shall be directed step by step, wherever they are at a loss, to do it in the best manner.

5. Samuel went accordingly to Beth-lehem, not in pomp, or with any retinue, only a servant to lead the heifer, which he was to sacrifice, yet the elders of Bethlehem trembled at his coming, fearing it was an indication of God's displeasure against them, and that he came to denounce some judgment for the iniquities of the place; guilt

guilt causes fear. Yet indeed it becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word: or, they feared it might be an occasion of Saul's displeasure against them, for, probably, they knew how much he was exasperated at Samuel, and feared he would pick a quarrel with them for entertaining him. They asked him, *Comest thou peaceably?* Art thou in peace thy self, and not flying from Saul? Art thou at peace with us, and not come with any message of wrath? We should all covet earnestly to stand upon good terms with God's prophets, and dread having the word of God, or their prayers, against us. When the son of David was born king of the Jews, all Jerusalem was troubled, *Matt. ii. 3.* Samuel kept home, and it was a strange thing to see him so far from his own house, they therefore concluded, it must needs be some extraordinary occasion that brought him, and feared the worst till he satisfied them, *ver. 5.* *I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice,* not with a message of wrath against you, but with the methods of peace and reconciliation; and therefore you may bid me welcome, and need not fear my coming; therefore *sanctify your selves,* and prepare to join with me in the sacrifice, that you may have the benefit of it. Note, Before solemn ordinances, there must be solemn preparation. When we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, it concerns us, by sequestering our selves from the world, and renewing the dedication of our selves to God, to sanctify our selves. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason enough to tremble, fearing that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering along with him; *a body hast thou prepared me;* let us sanctify our selves, that we may have an interest in his sacrifice. Samuel said, *I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice.* Note, Those that come to sacrifice, should come peaceably; religious exercises must not be performed tumultuously.

6. He had a particular regard to Jesse and his sons, for with them his private business lay, with which, it is likely, he acquainted Jesse at his first coming, and took up his lodging at his house. He spoke to all the elders to *sanctify themselves,* but he *sanctified Jesse, and his sons,* by praying with them, and instructing them. Perhaps, he had acquaintance with them before, and it appears, *chap. xx. 29.* where we read of the sacrifices that family had, that it was a devout religious family: Samuel assisted them in their family preparations for the publick sacrifice, and, it is probable, chose out David, and anointed him, at the family solemnities, before the sacrifice was offered, or the holy feast solemnized. Perhaps, he offered private sacrifices, like Job, *according to the number of them all,* *Job i. 5.* and, under colour of that, called for them all to appear before him. When signal blessings are coming into a family, they ought to sanctify themselves.

6. ¶ And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him. 7. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 8. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel: and he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 9. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by: and he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 10. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel: and Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. 11. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? and he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12. And he sent, and brought him in: Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David, from that day forward: so Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

If the sons of Jesse were told, that God would provide himself a king among them, as he had said, *ver. 1.* we may well suppose they all made the best appearance they could, and each hoped he should be the man; but here we are told,

1. How all the elder sons were passed by, who stood fairest for the preferment. Eliab, the eldest, was privately presented first to Samuel, probably, none being present but Jesse only, and Samuel thought he must needs be the man, *ver. 6.* *Surely this is the Lord's anointed.* The prophets themselves, when they spake from under the divine direction, were as liable to mistake, as other men; as Nathan, *2 Sam. vii. 3.* But God rectified the prophet's mistake, by a secret whisper to his mind, *ver. 7.* *Look not on his countenance.* It was strange, Samuel, that had been so wretchedly disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him, as much as

any man's could, should be so forward to judge of a man by that rule. When God would please the people with a king, he chose a proper man, but when he would have one after his own heart, he should not be chosen by the outside; men judge by the sight of the eyes, but God doth not. *Isa. xi. 3.* *The Lord looks on the heart;* i. e. 1. He knows it. We can tell how men look, but he can tell what they are. Man looks on the eyes, so the original word is, and is pleased with the liveliness and sprightliness that appears in them; but God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of that. 2. He judges of men by it. The good disposition of the heart, the holiness and goodness of that recommends us to God, and is *in his sight of great price,* *1 Pet. iii. 4.* not the majesty of the look, or the strength and stature of the body; let us reckon that true beauty which is within, and judge of men as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their mien.

When Eliab was set aside, Abinadab and Shammah, and after them four more of the sons of Jesse, seven in all, were presented to Samuel, as likely for his purpose, but Samuel, who now attended more carefully than he did at first to the divine direction, laid them all by, *The Lord has not chosen these,* *ver. 8, 9, 10.* Men dispose of their honours and estates to their sons, according to their seniority of age, and priority of birth, but God doth not. *The elder shall serve the younger.* Had it been left to Samuel, or Jesse, to make the choice, one of these had certainly been chosen; but God will magnify his sovereignty, in passing by some that were most promising, as well as in fastning on others that were less so.

2. How David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; his name signifies beloved, for he was a type of the beloved Son. Observe,

1. How he was now employed. He was in the fields *keeping the sheep,* *ver. 11.* and was left there, though there was a sacrifice and a feast at his father's house. The youngest use to be the fondlings of the family, but it should seem David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse; either they did not discern, or did not duly value, the excellent spirit he was of. Many a great genius lies buried in obscurity and contempt; and God oft exalts those whom men despise, and giveth *abundant honour to that part which lacked.* The Son of David was he whom men despised, *the stone which the builders refused,* and yet has a name above every name. David was taken, *from following the ewes, to feed Jacob,* *Psal. lxxviii. 71.* as Moses from keeping the flock of Jethro. An instance of his humility and industry, both which God delights to put honour upon. We would think a military life, but God saw a pastoral life, which gives advantage for contemplation and communion with heaven, the best preparative for kingly power, at least for those graces of the Spirit, which are necessary to the due discharge of that trust which attends it. David was keeping sheep, though it was a time of sacrifice; for there is mercy that takes place of sacrifice.

2. How earnest Samuel was to have him sent for. *We will not sit down to meat* (perhaps, it was not the feast upon the sacrifice, but a common meal) *till he come hither;* for if all the rest be rejected, this must be he. He that was designed not to sit at table at all, is now stayed for as the principal guest. If God will exalt them of low degree, who can hinder?

3. What appearance he made when he did come. No notice is taken of his clothing, no doubt, that was according to his employment, mean and coarse, as shepherds coats used to be, and he did not change his clothes as Joseph did, *Gen. xli. 14.* but he had a very honest look, not stately, as Saul's, but sweet and lovely: *he was ruddy, of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to,* *ver. 12.* i. e. he had a clear complexion, a good eye, and a lovely face; the features extraordinary, and something in his looks that was very charming. Though he was so far from using any art to help his beauty, that his employment exposed it to the sun and wind, yet nature kept its own, and by the sweetness of his aspect, gave manifest indications of an amiable temper and disposition of mind. Perhaps, his modest blush, when he was brought before Samuel, and received by him with surprizing respect, made him look much the handsomer.

4. The anointing of him. The Lord told Samuel, in his ear, (as he had done, *chap. ix. 15.*) that this was he whom he must anoint, *ver. 12.* Samuel objects not the meanness of his education, his youth, or the little respect he had in his own family, but, in obedience to the divine command, took his horn of oil, and anointed him, *ver. 13.* signifying thereby, 1. A divine designation to the government, after the death of Saul, of which hereby he gave him a full assurance. Not that he was at present invested with the royal power, but it was entailed upon him, to come to him in due time. 2. A divine communication of gifts and graces, to fit him for the government, and make him a type of him who was to be the Messiah, the anointed One, who received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure. He is said to be anointed in the midst of his brethren, who yet possibly did not understand it as a designation to the government, and therefore did not envy David, as Joseph's brethren did him; because they saw no further marks of dignity put upon him, no, not so much as a coat of divers colours. But bishop Patrick reads it, he anointed him from the midst of his brethren, i. e. he singled him out from the rest, and privately anointed him, but with a charge to keep his own counsel, and not to let his own brethren know it, as by what we find, *chap. xvii. 28.* it should

should seem, Eliab did not. It is computed, that David was now about twenty years old; if so, his troubles by Saul lasted ten years, for he was thirty years old when Saul died: Dr. Lightfoot reckons him to be about twenty-five, and that his troubles lasted but five years.

5. The happy effects of this anointing, the *spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward*, ver. 13. The anointing of him was not an empty ceremony, but a divine power went along with that instituted sign, and he found himself inwardly advanced in wisdom, and courage, and concern for the publick, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. This would abundantly satisfy him, that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestinated to the kingdom of glory, is our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and our experience of a work of grace in our own hearts. Some think his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in musick, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit's coming upon him. However, this made him the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Samuel having done this, went to Ramah in safety, and we never read of him again but once, chap. xix. 18. till we read of his death; now he retired to die in peace, since his eyes had seen the salvation, even the sceptre brought into the tribe of Judah.

14. ¶ But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16. Let our lord now command thy servants *which are* before thee, to seek out a man *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD *is* with him. 19. ¶ Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, *which is* with the sheep. 20. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21. And David came to Saul, and stood before him; and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. 22. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me: for he hath found favour in my sight. 23. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

We have here Saul falling, and David rising.

1. Here is Saul made a terror to himself; ver. 14. *The spirit of the Lord departed from him*. He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit, with which he was directed, animated and encouraged, in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul, as it is expressed, 2 Sam. vii. 15. for when the Spirit of the Lord departs from us, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive. The consequence of this was, that *an evil spirit from God troubled him*. They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humours of his body, and passions of his mind. He grew fretful and peevish, and discontented; timorous and suspicious, starting and trembling ever and anon; he was sometimes, saith Josephus, as if he had been choked, or strangled, and a perfect demoniack by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burthen to all about him.

2. Here is David made a physician to Saul, and by that means brought to court; a physician that helped him against the worst of diseases, when none else could. David was newly anointed privately to the kingdom, it would be of use to him to go to court, and see the world; it is here brought about for him, without any contrivance of his own, or his friends. Note, Those whom God designs for any service, his providence shall concur with his grace, to prepare and qualify them for it.

Saul is distempered; his servants have the honesty and courage to tell him what his distemper was, ver. 15. *an evil spirit*, not by chance, but *from God*, and his providence, *troubleth thee*. Now,

1. The means they all advise him to for his relief, was musick; ver. 16. Let us have a *cunning player on the harp*, to attend thee.

How much better friends had they been to him if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and to intercede with God for him, then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned to him. But their project is to make him merry and so cure him. Many whose consciences are convinced and startled, are for ever ruined by such methods as these, which drown all care of the soul in the delights of sense. Yet Saul's servants did not amiss to send for musick, as a help to cheer up the spirits, if they had but withal sent for a prophet to give him good counsel. And (as bishop Hall observes) it was well they did not send for a witch or diviner, by his enchantments to cast out the evil spirit; which has been the abominable wicked practice of some that have worn the christian name, who consult the devil in their distresses, and make hell their refuge. Those who thus agree with Satan, it will be no less than a miracle of divine grace, if ever they break off from him again.

2. One of his servants recommended David to him, as a fit person to be employed in the use of these means, little imagining that he was the man whom Samuel meant, when he told Saul of a neighbour of his, better than he, that should have the kingdom, chap. xv. 28. It is a very high character which this servant of Saul's here gives of David, ver. 18. that he was not only fit for his purpose, as a comely person, and cunning in playing, but a man of courage and conduct, a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, fit to be further preferred, and (which crowned his character) *the Lord is with him*. By this it appears, that though David, after he was anointed, returned to his country business, and there remained on his head no marks of the oil, so careful was he to keep that secret, yet the workings of the Spirit signified by the oil, could not be hid, but made him shine in obscurity, so that all his neighbours observed with wonder, the great improvements of his mind on a sudden. David, even in his shepherd's weeds, is become an oracle, a champion, and every thing that is great. His fame reached the court presently, for Saul was inquisitive after such young men, chap. xiv. 52. When the Spirit of God comes upon a man, he will make his face to shine.

3. David is hereupon sent for to court. And it seems,

1. His father was very willing to part with him, sent him very readily, and a present with him to Saul, ver. 20. the present was according to the usage of those times, bread and wine, compare chap. x. 3, 4. therefore acceptable, because expressive of the homage and allegiance of him that sent it. Probably, Jesse, who knew what his son David was designed for, was aware that providence was herein fitting him for it, and therefore he would not force providence, by sending him to court uncalled, yet he followed providence very cheerfully, when he saw it plainly putting him into the way of preferment. Some suggest, that when Jesse received that message, *Send me David thy son*, he began to be afraid that Saul had got some intimation of his being anointed, and sent for him to do him a mischief, and therefore Jesse sent a present to pacify him; but, it is probable, whoever brought the message, gave him an account on what design he was sent for.

2. Saul took a great kindness to him, ver. 21. *loved him greatly*, and designed to *make him his armour-bearer*, and (contrary to the manner of the king, chap. viii. 11.) asked his father's leave to keep him in his service, ver. 22. *Let David, I pray thee, stand before me*. And good reason he had to respect him, for he did him a great deal of service with his musick, ver. 23. His instrumental musick with his harp is only mentioned, but it should seem, by the account Josephus gives of it, that he added vocal musick to it, and sung hymns, probably divine hymns, songs of praise, to his harp. David's musick was Saul's physick. 1. Musick has a natural tendency towards the composing and exhilarating of the mind, when it is disturbed and saddened. Elifha used it for the calming of his spirits, 2 Kings iii. 15. On some it has a greater influence and effect than on others, and, probably, Saul was one of those. Not that it charmed the evil spirit, but it made his spirit sedate, and allayed those tumults of the animal spirits, by which the devil had advantage against him. The beams of the sun (it is the learned Bochart's comparison) cannot be cut with a sword, quenched with water, or blown out with wind, but by closing the window shuts, they may be kept out of the chamber. Musick cannot work upon the devil, but it may shut up the passages by which he had access to the mind. 2. David's musick was extraordinary, and in mercy to him, that he might gain a reputation at court, as one that had the Lord with him, God made his performances in musick more successful, in this case, than others would have been. Saul found, even after he had conceived an enmity to David, that no one else could do him the same service, chap. xix. 9, 10. which was a great aggravation of his outrage against him. It is pity, musick, which may be so serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be abused by any, to the support of vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart away from God and serious things: if that be, to any, the effect of it, it drives away the good spirit, not the evil spirit.

C H A P. XVII.

David is the man whom God now delights to honour, for he is a man after his own heart. We read in the foregoing chapter, how, after

he was anointed, Providence made him famous in the court; we read in this chapter, how providence made him much more famous in the camp, and, by both, not only marked him for a great man; but fitted him for the throne to which he was designed. In the court he was only Saul's physician, but in the camp Israel's champion; there he fairly fought, and beat Goliath of Gath. In the story observe, 1. What a figure Goliath made, and how daringly he challenged the armies of Israel, ver. 1,—11. 2. What a mean figure David made, when providence brought him to the army, ver. 12,—30. 3. The unparalleled bravery wherewith David undertook to encounter this Philistine, ver. 31,—39. 4. The pious resolution with which he attacked him, ver. 40,—47. 5. The glorious victory he obtained over him, with a sling and a stone, and the advantage which the Israelites thereby gained against the Philistines, ver. 48,—54. 6. The great notice which was hereupon taken of David at court, ver. 55,—58.

1. **N**OW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. 3. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. 4. ¶ And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span; 5. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail: and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. 6. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7. And the staff of his spear was like a weavers beam, and his spears head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. 8. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul? chuse you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. 10. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. 11. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

It was not long ago that the Philistines were soundly beaten, and put to the worse before Israel, and had been totally routed, if Saul's rashness had not prevented; but here we have them making head again. Observe,

1. How they defied Israel with their armies, ver. 1. They made a descent upon the Israelites country, and possessed themselves, as it should seem, of some part of it, for they encamped in a place which belongeth to Judah. Israel's ground had never been footing for Philistines armies, if Israel had been faithful to their God. The Philistines (it is probable) had heard that Samuel had fallen out with Saul, and forsaken him, and no longer assisted and advised him, and that Saul was grown melancholy, and unfit for business, and that encouraged them to make this attempt, for the retrieving of the credit they had lately lost. The enemies of the church are watchful to take all advantages, and they never have greater advantages, than when her protectors have provoked God's Spirit and prophets to leave them. Saul mustered his forces, and faced them, ver. 2, 3. And here we must take notice, 1. That the evil spirit for the present had left Saul, chap. xvi. 23. David's harp having given him some relief, perhaps, the alarms and affairs of the war prevented the return of the distemper. Business is a good antidote against melancholy. Let the mind have something without to fasten on, and employ it self about, and it will be the less in danger of preying upon it self. God, in mercy to Israel, suspended the judgment for a while; for how distracted must the affairs of the publick have been, if, at this juncture, the prince had been distracted? 2. That David for the present was returned to Beth-lehem, and had left the court, ver. 15. When Saul had no further occasion to use him for the relief of his distemper, though, being anointed, he had a very good private reason, and, having a grant of the place of Saul's armour-bearer, he had a very plausible pretence to have continued his attendance, as a retainer to the court, yet he went home to Beth-lehem, and returned to keep his father's sheep; this was a rare instance, in a young man, that stood so fair for preferment, of humility, and affection to his parents. He knew better, than most do, how to come down again, after he had begun to rise, and strangely preferred the retirements of a pastoral life, before all the

pleasures and gaieties of the court. None more fit for honour than he, nor that deserved it better, and yet none more dead to it.

2. How they defied Israel with their champion Goliath, whom they were almost as proud of, as he was of himself, hoping, by him, to recover their reputation and dominion. Perhaps, the army of the Israelites was superior in number and strength to that of the Philistines, which made the Philistines decline a battle, and stand at a bay with them, desiring rather to put the issue upon a single combat, in which, having such a champion, they hoped to gain the victory. Now, concerning this champion, observe,

1. His prodigious size. He was of the sons of Anák, who, at Gath, kept their ground in Joshua's time, Josh. xi. 22. and kept up a race of giants there, of which Goliath was one, and, it is probable, one of the largest. He was in height six cubits and a span, ver. 4. The learned bishop Cumberland has made it out, that the scripture cubit was above twenty-one inches, (above three inches more than our half a yard) and a span was half a cubit, by which computation, Goliath wanted but eight inches of four yards in height, eleven foot and four inches. A monstrous stature, and which made him very formidable, especially, if he had strength and spirit proportionable.

2. His armour; art, as well as nature, made him terrible. He was well fixed with defensive armour, ver. 5, 6. a helmet of brass on his head, a coat of mail, made of brass plates laid over one another, like the scales of a fish; and, because his legs would lie most within the reach of an ordinary man, he wore brass boots, and a large corslet of brass about his neck. The coat is said to weigh five thousand shekels, and a shekel was half an ounce averdupoise. A vast weight for a man to carry, all the other parts of his armour being proportionable. But some think it should be translated, not the weight of the coat, but the value of it, was five thousand shekels; so much it cost. His offensive weapons were extraordinary, of which his spear only is here described, ver. 7. it was like a weaver's beam; his arm could manage that, which an ordinary man could scarce heave. His shield only, which was the lightest of all his accoutrements, was carried before him by his esquire, probably, for state; for he that was clad in brass, little needed a shield.

3. His challenge. The Philistines having chosen him for their champion, to save themselves from the hazard of a battle, he here throws down the gauntlet, and bids defiance to the armies of Israel, ver. 8, 9, 10. He came into the valley that lay between the camps, and his voice, probably, being as much stronger than other peoples, as his arm was, he cried so as to make them all hear him, Give me a man, that we may fight together. He looks upon himself with admiration, because he was so much taller and stronger than all about him; his heart (saith bishop Hall) nothing but a lump of proud flesh. He looks upon Israel with disdain, because they had none among them of such a monstrous bulk, and defies them to find a man among them, bold enough to enter the lists with him. 1. He upbraids them with their folly in drawing an army together, Why are ye come to set the battle in array? How dare you oppose the mighty Philistines? Or, what need the two armies engage, when the controversy may be sooner decided, with only the expence of one life, and the hazard of another? 2. He offers to put the war entirely upon the issue of the duel he proposeth. If your champion kill me, we will be your servants; if I kill him, you shall be ours. This, saith bishop Patrick, was only a bravado, for no nation would be willing thus to venture its all upon the success of one man, nor is it justifiable; notwithstanding Goliath's stipulation here, when he was killed, the Philistines did not stand to his word, nor submit themselves servants to Israel. When he boasts I am a Philistine, and you servants to Saul, he would have it thought a great piece of condescension in him, who was a chief ruler, to enter the lists with an Israelite; for he looked on them as no better than slaves. The Chaldee paraphrase brings him in boasting, that he was the man that had killed Hophni and Phinehas, and taken the ark prisoner; but that the Philistines had never given him so much as the command of a regiment in recompence of his services, whereas Saul had been made king for his services; let him therefore take up the challenge.

4. The terror this struck upon Israel; ver. 11. Saul and all his army were greatly afraid. The people had not been dismayed, but that they observed Saul's courage failed him, and it is not to be expected, that, if the leader be a coward, the followers should be bold. We found before, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, chap. xi. 6. none could be more daring, nor forward, to answer the challenge of Nahash the Ammonite, but now, the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, even the big looks and big words of a single Philistine make him change colour. But where was Jonathan all this while? Why did not he accept the challenge, who in the last war had so bravely engaged a whole army of Philistines? Doubtless, he felt not himself stirred up of God to it, as he did then. As the best, so the bravest men, are no more than what God makes them. Jonathan must now sit still, because the honour of engaging Goliath is reserved for David. In great and good actions, the wind of the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. Now the pious Israelites lament their king's breach with Samuel.

12. ¶ Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had

eight sons : and the man went among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul. 13. And the three eldest sons of Jesse went, *and* followed Saul to the battle : and the names of his three sons that went to the battle, *were* Eliab the first-born, and next unto him, Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14. And David *was* the youngest : and the three eldest followed Saul. 15. But David went, and returned from Saul, to feed his fathers sheep at Bethlehem. 16. And the Philistine drew near, morning and evening, and presented himself forty days. 17. And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren. 18. And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel *were* in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20. ¶ And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him ; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. 21. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. 22. And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. 23. And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words : and David heard *them*. 24. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid. 25. And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up ? surely to defy Israel is he come up : and it shall be *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his fathers house free in Israel. 26. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel ? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God ? 27. And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 28. ¶ And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men ; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither ? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness ? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart ; for thou art come down, that thou mightest see the battle. 29. And David said, What have I now done ? *Is there* not a cause ? 30. ¶ And he turned from him towards another, and spake after the same manner : and the people answered him again after the former manner.

Forty days the two armies lay encamped facing one another, each advantageously posted, but neither forward to engage. Either they were parleying, and treating of an accommodation, or waiting for recruits ; and, perhaps, there were frequent skirmishes between parties of both sides. All this while, twice a day, morning and evening, did the insulting champion appear in the field, and repeat his challenge ; his own heart growing more and more proud for his not being answered, and the people of Israel more and more timorous ; while God designed hereby to ripen him for destruction, and to make Israel's deliverance the more illustrious. All this while David is keeping his father's sheep, but at the end of forty days, providence brings him to the field to win and wear the laurel, which no other Israelite dares venture for.

We have in these verses,

1. The present state of his family. His father was old, *ver.* 12. *he went among men for an old man*, was taken notice of for his great age, above what was usual at that time, and therefore had his quietus from publick services, and went not in person to the wars, but sent his sons ; he had the honours paid him that were due to his age, his hoary head was a crown of glory to him. David's three elder brethren, who, perhaps, envied his place at the court, got their father to send for him home, and let them go to the camp, where they hoped to signalize themselves, and eclipse him, *ver.* 13, 14. while David himself, was so far from being proud of the services he had done his prince, or ambitious of further preferment, that he not only returned from court to the obscurity of his father's house, but to the care and toil, and (as it proved, *ver.* 34.) the peril, of *keeping his father's sheep*. It was the praise of this humility, that it came after he had the honour of a courtier ; and the re-

ward of it, that it came before the honour of a conqueror ; *before honour is humility*. Now he had that opportunity of meditation and prayer, and other acts of devotion, which fitted him for what he was destined to, more than all the military exercises of that inglorious camp could do.

2. The orders his father gave him to go visit his brethren in the camp. He did not himself ask leave to go to satisfy his curiosity, or to gain experience, and make observations ; but his father sent him on a mean and homely errand, which any of his servants might have done. He must carry some bread and cheese to his brethren, ten loaves with some parched corn, for themselves, *ver.* 17. and ten cheeses, which, it seems, he thought too good for them, but for a present to their colonel, *ver.* 18. David must still be the drudge of the family, though he was to be the greatest ornament of it. He had not so much as an ass at command to carry his load, but must take it on his back, and yet run to the camp. Jesse, we thought, was privy to his being anointed, and yet industriously kept him thus mean and obscure, probably, to hide him from the eye of suspicion and envy, knowing he was anointed to a crown in reversion. He must observe how his brethren fared, whether they were not reduced to short allowance, now the encampment continued so long, that, if need were, he might send them more provisions. And he must take their pledge, *i. e.* if they had pawned any thing, he must redeem it ; take notice of their company, so some observe, who they associate with, and what sort of life they lead ; perhaps, David, like Joseph, had formerly brought to his father their evil report, and now he sends him to enquire concerning their manners. See the care of pious parents about their children, when they are abroad from them, especially, in places of temptation, they are solicitous how they carry themselves, and particularly what company they keep : Let children think of this, and carry themselves accordingly, remembering, that, when they are from under their parents eye, they are still under God's eye.

3. David's dutiful obedience to his father's command. His prudence and care made him be up early, *ver.* 20. and yet not to leave his sheep without a keeper, so faithful was he in a few things, and therefore the fitter to be made ruler over many things ; and so well had he learnt to obey, before he pretended to command. God's providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and, as it should seem, were more likely to come to an engagement, than they had yet been of all the forty days, *ver.* 21. Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army just in that critical juncture, but the wise God orders the time, and all the circumstances of actions and affairs, so as to serve his designs of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after his own heart. Now observe here,

1. How brisk and lively David was, *ver.* 22. What carriage he brought he honestly took care of, and left it with those that had the charge of the bag and baggage ; but though he had come a long journey with a great load, he *ran into the army*, to see what was a doing there, and to pay his respects to his brethren. *Seest thou a man thus diligent in his business*, he is in the way of preferment, *he shall stand before kings*.

2. How bold and daring the Philistine was, *ver.* 23. Now the armies were drawn out into a line of battle, he appeared first to renew his challenge, vainly imagining that he was in the eager chase of his own glory and triumph, whereas really he was but courting his own destruction.

3. How timorous and faint-hearted the men of Israel were. Though they had for forty days together been used to his haughty looks, and threatening language, and, having seen no execution done by either, might have learned to despise both ; yet, upon his approach, they *fled from him, and were sore afraid*, *ver.* 24. One Philistine could never thus have chased a thousand Israelites, and put ten thousand to flight, unless their rock, being treacherously forsaken by them, had justly *sold them, and shut them up*, Deut. xxxii. 30.

4. How high Saul bid for a champion. Though he was the tallest of all the men of Israel, and, if he had not been so, while he kept close to God, might safely have taken up the gauntlet which this insolent Philistine threw down himself, yet the Spirit of the Lord being departed from him, he durst not do it, nor press Jonathan to do it : but, whoever will do it, shall have as good preferment as he can give him, *ver.* 25. If the hope of wealth and honour will prevail with any man to expose himself so far, it is proclaimed, that the bold adventurer, if he come off, shall marry the king's daughter, and have a good portion with her : but, as it should seem, whether he come off or no, his *father's house shall be free in Israel*, from all toll, tribute, and custom, and services to the crown ; or, shall be ennobled and advanced to the peerage.

5. How much concerned David was to assert the honour of God and Israel, against the impudent challenges of this champion. He asked what reward was promised to him that should slay this Philistine, *ver.* 26. though he knew already, not because he was ambitious of the honours, but because he would have it taken notice of, and reported to Saul, how much he resented the indignity hereby done to Israel, and Israel's God. He might have presumed so far upon his acquaintance and interest at court, as to have gone himself to Saul to offer his service ; but his modesty would not let him

do that; it was one of his rules, before it was one of his son's proverbs, *Put not forth thy self in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men*, Prov. xxv. 6. yet his zeal put him upon that method, which, he hoped, would bring him into this great engagement. Two considerations, it seems, fired David with a holy indignation. 1. That the challenger was one that was uncircumcised, a stranger to God, and out of covenant with him. 2. That the challenged were the armies of the living God, devoted to him, employed by him, and for him, so that the affronts done to them, reflected upon the living God himself, and that he cannot bear. When therefore some had told him, what was the reward proposed for killing the Philistine, ver. 27. he asked others, ver. 30. with the same resentment, which he expected would at length come to Saul's ear.

6. How he was brow beaten and discouraged by his elder brother Eliab, who, taking notice of his forwardness, fell into a passion upon it, and gave David very abusive language, ver. 28. Consider it, 1. As the fruit of Eliab's jealousy. He was the eldest brother, and David the youngest, and, perhaps, it had been customary with him (as it is with too many elder brothers) to trample upon him, and take every occasion to chide him. But those who thus exalt themselves over their juniors, may perhaps live to see themselves, by a righteous providence, abased, and those, whom they are abusive to, exalted. Time may come, when the elder may serve the younger. But Eliab was now vexed, that his younger brother should speak those bold words against the Philistine, which he himself durst not say. He knew what honour David had had already in the court, and if he should now get him honour in the camp (from which he thought he had found means effectually to seclude him, ver. 15.) the glory of his elder brother would be eclipsed and stained; and therefore (such is the nature of jealousy) he would rather Goliath should triumph over Israel, than that David should be the man that should triumph over him. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?* especially the envy of a brother, which Jacob, and Joseph, and David here, experienced the keenness of? See Prov. xviii. 19. It is very ill-favoured language that Eliab here gives him; not only unjust and unkind, but at this time basely ungrateful; for David was now sent by his father, as Joseph by his, on a kind visit to his brethren. Eliab intended, in what he said, not only to grieve and discourage David himself, and quench that noble fire he perceived glowing in his breast, but to represent him to those about him as an idle proud lad, not fit to be taken notice of. He gives them to understand, that his business was only to keep sheep, and falsely insinuates, that he was a careless unfaithful shepherd; though he had left his charge in good hands, ver. 20. yet he must tauntingly be asked, *With whom hast thou left those few sheep?* Though he came down now to the camp in obedience to his father, and kindness to his brethren, and Eliab knew it, yet this is turned to his reproach; thou art come down, not to do any service, but to gratify thy own curiosity, and only to look about thee; and from hence he will infer, *the pride and naughtiness of his heart*, and pretends to know it as certainly as if he were in his bosom: David could appeal to God concerning his humility and sincerity, Psalm xvii. 3. cxxx. i. and at this time gave proofs of both, and yet could not escape this hard character from his own brother. See the folly, absurdity, and wickedness, of a proud and envious passion; how groundless its jealousies are, how unjust its censures, how unfair its representations, how bitter its invectives, and how indecent its language. God, by his grace, keep us from such a spirit! 2. As a trial of David's meekness, patience, and constancy; a sharp trial it was, and he approved himself well in it: for, (1.) He bore the provocation with an admirable temper, ver. 29. *What have I now done?* what fault have I committed, for which I should thus be chidden? *Is there not a cause for my coming to the camp, when my father sent me?* *Is there not a cause, for my resenting the injury done to Israel's honour, by Goliath's challenges?* He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing, but with a soft answer turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion, was, in some respects, more honourable than that of Goliath. *He that hath rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty.* It was no time for David to quarrel with his brother, when the Philistines were upon them. The more threatening the church's enemies are, the more bearing her friends should be with one another. (2.) He broke through the discouragement with an admirable resolution. He would not be driven off from his thoughts of engaging the Philistine, by the ill-will of his brother. Those that undertake great and publick services, must not think it strange if they be discountenanced, and opposed, by those, from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work in the face, not only of their enemies threats, but of their friends flights and suspicions.

31. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. 32. ¶ And David said to Saul, Let no mans heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine, to fight with him:

for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. 34. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his fathers sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. 35. And I went out after him, and smote him; and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. 38. ¶ And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go, for he had not proved it: and David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these: for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

David is at length presented to Saul for his champion, ver. 31. and he bravely undertakes to fight the Philistine, ver. 32. *Let no mans heart fail because of him*; it would have reflected too much upon the valour of his prince if he had said, *Let not thy heart fail*, therefore he speaks generally, *Let no man's heart fail*. A little shepherd, come but this morning from keeping sheep, has more courage than all the mighty men of Israel, and encourageth them. Thus doth God often send good words to his Israel, and do great things for them by the weak and foolish things of the world. David only desires a commission from Saul to go and fight with the Philistine, but saith nothing to him of the reward he had proposed, because that was not the thing he was ambitious of, but only the honour of serving God and his country: Nor would he seem to question Saul's generosity.

Two things David had to do with Saul.

1. To get clear of the objection Saul made against his undertaking. Alas, saith Saul, Thou hast a good heart on it, but art by no means an equal match for this Philistine: to engage with him is to throw away a life which may better be reserved for more agreeable services: *Thou art but a youth*, rash and inconsiderate, weak and unversed in arms. He is a man that has the head and hands of a man, a man of war, trained up and enured to it from his youth, ver. 33. and how canst thou expect but that he will be too hard for thee?

David, as he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so he answered Saul's fear with faith, and gives a reason of the hope which was in him, that he should conquer the Philistine to the satisfaction of Saul. We have reason to fear that Saul had no great acquaintance with, or regard to, the word of God, and therefore David, in reasoning with him, fetcheth not his arguments and encouragements from thence, how much soever he had an eye to that in his own mind; but he argues from experience, though he was but a youth and never in the wars, yet, perhaps, he had done as much as the killing of Goliath came to, for he had had, by divine assistance, spirit enough to encounter, and strength enough to subdue a lion once, and another time a bear that robbed him of his lambs, ver. 34, 35, 36. to these he compares this uncircumcised Philistine, looks upon him to be as much a ravenous beast as either of them, and therefore doubts not but to deal as easily with him; and hereby gives Saul to understand, that he was not so unexperienced in hazardous combats as he took him to be.

1. He tells his story like a man of mettle; he is not ashamed to own that he kept his father's sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with, so far is he from concealing it, that, from his employment as a shepherd, he fetches the experiences that now animated him. But he lets those about him know that he was no ordinary shepherd. Whatever our profession or calling is, be it never so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner. When David kept sheep, (1.) He approved himself very careful and tender of his flock, though it was not his own, but his father's. He could not see a lamb in distress but he would venture his life to rescue it. This temper made him fit to be a king, to whom the lives of the subjects should be dear, and their blood precious, Psalm lxxii. 14. and fit to be a type of Christ, the good shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, Isa. xl. 11. and who not only ventured, but laid down his life for the sheep. And fit to be an example to ministers, with the utmost care and diligence to watch for souls, that they be not a prey to the roaring lion. (2.) He approved himself very bold and brave in the defence of his flock. This was that which he was now concerned to give proof of, and better evidence could not be demanded than this; thy servant not only rescued the lambs, but, to revenge the injury, slew both the lion and the bear.

2. He applies his story like a man of faith. He owns, ver. 37. it was the Lord that delivered him from the lion and the bear, to him he gives the praise of that great achievement, and from thence he infers, *he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine*. The lion and the bear were only enemies to me and my sheep, and it was in

defence of my own interest that I attacked them, but this Philistine is an enemy to God and Israel, *defies the armies of the living God*, and it is for their honour that I attack him. Note, 1. Our experiences ought to be improved by us, as our encouragements to trust in God and venture in the way of duty. He that has delivered doth and will. 2. By the care which common Providence takes of the inferior creatures, and the protection they are under, we may be encouraged to depend upon that special providence which is conversant about the Israel of God. He that sets bounds to the waves of the sea and the rage of wild beasts, can and will restrain the wrath of wicked men. St. Paul seems to allude to this of David, *2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*, and therefore I trust the Lord shall deliver me. And, perhaps, David here thought of the story of Sampson, and encouraged himself with it, for his slaying of a lion was a happy preface of his many illustrious victories over the Philistines in single combat.

Thus David took off Saul's objection against his undertaking, and gained a commission to fight the Philistine, with which Saul gave him a hearty good wish; since he would not venture himself he prayed for him that would, *Go, and the Lord be with thee*. A good word if it were not spoken customarily and in a formality, as too often it is.

2. But David has somewhat to do likewise to get clear of the armour wherewith Saul would, by all means, have him dressed up, when he went upon this great action, *ver. 38. He armed David with his armour*, not that which he wore himself; the disproportion of his stature would not admit that, but some that he kept in his armoury; little thinking that he on whom he now put his helmet and coat of mail, must shortly inherit his crown and robe. David being not yet resolved which way to attack his enemy, *girded on his sword*, not knowing, as yet, but he should have occasion to make use of it; but he found the armour would encumber him, and would be rather his burthen than his defence, and therefore he desires leave of Saul to put them off again; *I cannot go with these for I have not proved them*, i. e. I have never been accustomed to such accoutrements as these. We may suppose Saul's armour to be very fine and very firm, but what good would it do David if it were not fit, or if he knew not how to manage himself in it. Those that aim at things above their education and usage, and covet the attire and armour of princes, forget that that is best for us which we are fit for and accustomed to; if we had our desire we should wish to be in our own coat again, and say, we cannot go with these, and therefore better go without them.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip, and his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

41. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David, and the man that bare the shield went before him.

42. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he despised him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43. And the Philistine said unto David, *Am I a dog*, that thou comest to me with staves? and the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORDS, and he will give you into our hands.

We are now coming near this famous combat, and have in these verses the preparations and remonstrances made on both sides.

1. The preparation made on both sides for the encounter. The Philistine was already fixed, as he had been daily for forty days last past; well might he go with his armour, for he had sufficiently proved it. Only we are told, *ver. 41. that he came on and drew near*, a signal, it is likely, being given that his challenge was accepted, and, as if he distrusted his helmet and coat of mail, a man went before him carrying his shield, for his own hands were full with his sword and spear, *ver. 45*. But what arms and ammunition is David furnished with? Truly none but what he brought with him as a shepherd; no breastplate, or corslet, but his plain shepherd's coat; no spear, but his staff; no sword or bow, but his sling; no quiver, but his scrip; nor any arrows, but, instead of them, five smooth stones picked up out of the brook, *ver. 40*. By this it appeared that his confidence was purely in the power of God, and not in any

sufficiency of his own; and that, now at length, he that put it into his heart to fight the Philistine, put it into his head with what weapons to do it.

2. The Remonstrances on both sides. In which observe,

1. How very proud Goliath was, (1.) With what scorn he looked upon his adversary, *ver. 42*. He looked about expecting to meet some tall strong man, but when he saw what a mean figure he made with whom he was to engage, he despised him, thought it below him to enter the lists with him, and fearing that the contemptibleness of the champion he contended with would lessen the glory of his victory. He took notice of his person, that he was but a youth, not come to his strength, *ruddy and of a fair countenance*, fitter to accompany the virgins of Israel in their dances (if mixed dancing was then in use) than to lead on the men of Israel in their battles. He took notice of his array with great indignation, *ver. 43. Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?* Dost thou think to beat me as easily as thou dost thy shepherd's dog? (2.) With what confidence he presumed upon his success. He cursed David by his gods, imprecating the impotent vengeance of his idols against him, thinking these fire-balls thrown about him would secure his success: and therefore, in confidence of that, he darts his menaces, as if threatening words would kill, *ver. 44. Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, it will be a tender and delicate feast for them. Thus the security and presumption of fools destroys them.

2. How very pious David was. His speech favours nothing of ostentation, but God is all in all in it, *ver. 45, 46, 47*.

1. He derives his authority from God. *I come to thee*, by warrant and commission from heaven, *in the name of the Lord*, who has called me to, and animated me for, this undertaking; and who, by his universal providence, is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; and therefore has power to do what he pleaseth: and, by the special grace of his covenant, is the God of the armies of Israel, and therefore has engaged, and will employ his power, for their protection, and against thee who hast impiously defied them. The name of God David relied on, as Goliath did on his sword and spear. See *Psal. xx. 7. cxviii. 10, 11*.

2. He depends for success upon God, *ver. 46*. David speaks with as much assurance as Goliath had done, but upon better grounds; it is his faith that faith, *This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand*, and not only thy carcase, but the carcases of the host of the Philistines shall be given to the birds and beasts of prey.

3. He devotes the praise and glory of all to God. He did not, like Goliath, seek his own honour, but the honour of God; not doubting but by the success of this action, (1.) All the world should be made to know that *there is a God*, and that the God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lye. (2.) All Israel (whom he calls not *this army*, but *this assembly*, or church, because they were now religiously attending the goings of their God and King, as they used to do it in the sanctuary) they shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, *ver. 47*. but can, when he pleases, save without either, and against both, *Psal. xli. 9*. David addresseth himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer a sacrifice to the justice of God, than as a soldier that was going to engage an enemy of his country.

48. And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51. Therefore David ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

52. And the men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron: and the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

53. And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

54. And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

55. ¶ And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth?

And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

56. And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.

57. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

hand. 58. And Saul said to him, whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, *I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.*

Here is, 1. The engagement between the two champions, *ver. 48.* To this engagement, 1. The Philistine advanced with a great deal of state and gravity: if he must encounter a pigmy, yet it shall be with the magnificence of a giant, and a grandee. This is intimated in the manner of expression. *He arose and came and drew nigh*, like a stalking mountain, overlaid with brass and iron, *to meet David.* 2. David advanced with no less activity and cheerfulness, as one that aimed more to do execution, than to make a figure; he *hasted and ran*, being light clad, *to meet the Philistine.* We may imagine with what tenderness and compassion the Israelites saw such a pretty youth as this, throwing himself into the mouth of destruction, but he knew whom he had believed, and for whom he acted.

2. The fall of Goliath in this engagement. He was in no haste, because in no fear, but confident that he should soon at one stroke cleave his adversary's head: but while he was preparing to do it solemnly, David did his business effectually, without any parade, he flung a stone which hit him in the forehead, and, in the twinkling of an eye, fetched him to the ground, *ver. 49.* He knew there were famous slingers in Israel, *Judg. xx. 16.* yet was either so forgetful, or presumptuous, as to go with the beaver of his helmet open, and thither to the only part left exposed, not so much David's art, as God's providence, directed the stone, and brought it with such force that it sunk into his head, notwithstanding the impudence with which his forehead was brazened. See how frail and uncertain life is, even then when it thinks it self best fortified, and how quickly, how easily, and with how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out, and death to enter. Goliath himself *has not power over the spirit to retain the spirit*, *Eccl. viii. 8.* Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armour. See how God resists the proud, and pours contempt upon those that bid defiance to him and his people. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. One of the Rabbins thinks, that when Goliath said to David, *Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, he threw up his head so hastily, that his helmet fell off, and so left his broad forehead, a fair mark for David. To compleat the execution, he drew Goliath's own sword, a two-handed weapon for David, and with it *cut off his head*, *ver. 51.* What needed David take a sword of his own? his enemy's sword shall serve his purpose, when he has occasion for one. God is greatly glorified, when his proud enemies are cut off with their own sword, and he makes *their own tongues to fall upon them*, *Psal. lxiv. 8.* David's victory over Goliath, was typical of the triumphs of the son of David, over Satan, and all the powers of darkness, whom he *spoiled, and made a shew of them openly*, *Col. ii. 15.* and, we through him, are *more than conquerors.*

3. The defeat of the Philistines army hereupon. They relied wholly upon the strength of their champion, and therefore, when they saw him slain, they did not, as Goliath had offered, throw down their arms, and surrender themselves servants to Israel, *ver. 9.* but took to their heels, being wholly dispirited, and thinking it to no purpose, to oppose one, before whom such a mighty man was fallen; *they fled*, *ver. 51.* and this put life into the Israelites, they *shouted and pursued them*, *ver. 52.* David, it is probable, leading them on in the pursuit, even to the gates of their own cities. In their return from the chase, they seized all their bag and baggage, plundered their tents, *ver. 53.* and enriched themselves with the spoil.

4. David's disposal of his trophies, *ver. 54.* He brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, to be a terror to the Jebusites, who hold the strong hold of Sion; it is probable, he carried it in triumph to other cities; *his armour he laid up in his tent*; only the sword was preserved behind the ephod, in the tabernacle, as consecrated to God, and a memorial of the victory, to his honour, *chap. xxi. 9.*

5. The notice that was taken of David. Though he had been at court formerly, yet having been for some time absent, *ver. 15.* Saul had forgotten him, being melancholy and mindless, and little thinking that his musician should have spirit enough to be his champion, and therefore, as if he had never seen him before, he asked whose son he was. Abner was a stranger to him, but brought him to Saul himself, *ver. 57.* and he gave a modest account of himself, *ver. 58.* And now he was introduced to the court, on much greater advantages than before; in which he owned God's hand, performing all things for him.

C H A P. XVIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left David in triumph; now in this chapter we have, 1. The improvement of his triumphs; he soon became, (1.) Saul's constant attendant, *ver. 2.* (2.) Jonathan's covenant friend, *ver. 1, 3, 4.* (3.) The darling of his country, *ver. 5, 7, 16.* 2. The allays of his triumphs. This is the vanity that accompanies even a right work, that for it a man is envied, *Eccl. iv. 4.* So David was by Saul. (1.) He hated

him, and sought to kill him himself, *ver. 8, 11.* (2.) He feared him, and contrived how he might have some mischief done him, *ver. 12, 17.* Proposed to marry his daughter to him; but, 1. Balked him of the eldest to provoke him, *ver. 19.* and, 2. Gave him the younger upon conditions, which would endanger his life, *ver. 20, 25.* But David performed his conditions bravely, *ver. 26, 27.* and grew to be more and more esteemed, *ver. 28, 30.* Still David is rising, but (as all that aim at the crown of life must expect) he had a great deal of difficulty and opposition to grapple with.

1. **A**N D it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the Soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his fathers house. 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

David was anointed to the crown, to take it out of Saul's hand, and over Jonathan's head, and yet here we find,

1. That Saul, who was now in possession of the crown, reposed a confidence in him, God so ordering it, that he might, by his preferment at court, be prepared for future service. Saul now took him home with him, and would not suffer him to return again to his retirement, *ver. 2.* And David having signalized himself, above the men of war, in taking up the challenge which they declined, *Saul set him over the men of war*, *ver. 5.* not that he made him general, Abner was in that post, but, perhaps, captain of the life-guard; or, though he was youngest, he ordered him to have the precedency, in recompence of his great services. He employed him in the affairs of government, *and David went out whithersoever Saul sent him*, shewing himself as obsequious, as he was bold and courageous. Those that hope to rule, must first learn to obey. He had approved himself a dutiful son to Jesse his father, and now a dutiful servant to Saul his master; those that are good in one relation, it is to be hoped, will be so in another.

2. That Jonathan, who was heir to the crown, entered into covenant with him, God so ordering it, that David's way might be the clearer, when his rival was his friend.

(1.) Jonathan conceived an extraordinary kindness and affection for him, *ver. 1.* When he had made an end of speaking to Saul, he perfectly fell in love with him. Whether it refers to his conference with Saul before the battle, *chap. xvii. 34, 37.* or to that after, *ver. 58.* in which, it is probable, much more was said than is there set down, is uncertain. But in both, David expressed himself with so much prudence, modesty and piety, such a felicity of expression, with so much boldness, and yet so much sweetness, and all this so natural and unaffected, and the more surprizing, because of the disadvantages of his education and appearance, *that the soul of Jonathan was immediately knit unto the soul of David.* Jonathan had formerly set upon a Philistine army with the same faith and bravery that David had now attacked a Philistine giant; so that there was between them a very near resemblance of affections, dispositions, and counsels, which made their spirits unite so easily, so quickly, so closely, that they seemed but as one soul in two bodies. None had so much reason to disaffect David as Jonathan had, because he was to put him by the crown, yet none affects him more. Those that are governed in their love by principles of wisdom and grace, will not suffer their affections to be alienated by any secular regards or considerations: the greater thoughts will swallow up, and overrule the lesser.

(2.) He testified his love to David by a generous present he made him, *ver. 4.* He was concerned to see so great a soul, though lodged in so fair a body, yet disguised in the mean and despicable dress of a poor shepherd, and therefore takes care to put him presently into the habit of a courtier, for he gave him a robe, and of a soldier, for he gave him, instead of his staff and sling, a sword and bow, and, instead of his shepherd's scrip, a girdle, either a belt, or a sash; and, which made the present much more obliging, they were the same that he himself had worn, and (as a preface of what would follow) he stripped himself of them to dress David in them. Saul's would not fit him, but Jonathan's did; their bodies were of a size, an indication of the suitableness of their minds. When Saul put these marks of honour on David, he put them off again, because he would first earn them, and then wear them, but now he had given proofs of the spirit of a prince and soldier, he was not ashamed to wear the habits of a prince and soldier. David is seen in Jonathan's clothes, that all may take notice he is Jonathan's second self. Our Lord Jesus has thus shewed his love to us, that he stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to enrich us, nay, he did

more than Jonathan, he clothed himself with our rags, whereas Jonathan did not put on David's.

(3.) He endeavoured the perpetuating of this friendship: so entirely satisfied were they in each other, even at the first interview, that they made a covenant with each other, *ver. 3.* Their mutual affection was sincere; and he that bears an honest mind, startles not at assurances. True love desires to be constant. Those who love Christ as their own souls, will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant.

3. That both court and country agreed to bless him: it is but seldom that they agree in their favourites; yet David was *accepted in the sight of all the people, and also* (which was strange) *in the sight of Saul's servants*, *ver. 5.* The former cordially loved him, the latter could not for shame but care and compliment him. And it was certainly a great instance of the power of God's grace in David, that he was able to bear all this respect and honour flowing in upon him of a sudden, without being lifted up above measure. Those that climb so fast, have need of good heads, and good hearts: it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

6. And it came to pass as they came when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. 7. And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 8. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom? 9. And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. 10. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand. 11. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*: and David avoided out of his presence twice.

Now begin David's troubles, and they not only tread on the heels of his triumphs, but take rise from them; such is the vanity of that in this world which seems greatest.

1. He was too much magnified by the common people. Some time after the victory, Saul went a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel that lay next him, to receive the congratulations of the country. And when he made his publick entry into any place, the women were most forward to shew him respect, as was usual then in publick triumphs, *ver. 6.* and they had got a song, it seems, which they sung in their dances (made by some poet or other, that was a great admirer of David's bravery, and was more just than wise, in giving his achievements in the late action, the preference before Saul's) the burthen of which was, *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.* Such a difference as this Moses made between the numbers of Ephraim and Manasseh, *Deut. xxxiii. 17.*

2. This mightily displeased Saul, and made him envy David, *ver. 8, 9.* he ought to have considered that they referred only to this late action, and intended not to diminish any of Saul's former exploits: and that in the action now celebrated, it was undeniably true, that David, in killing Goliath, did, in effect, slay all the Philistines that were slain that day, and defeated the whole army; so that they did but give David his due: it may be, he that composed the song, only used a poetical liberty, and intended not any invidious comparison between Saul and David; or, if he did, it was below the great mind of a prince, to take notice of such a reflection upon his personal honour, when it appeared that the glory of the publick was sincerely intended. But Saul was very wroth, and presently suspected some treasonable design at the bottom of it; *What can he have more but the kingdom?* This made him eye David, as one he was jealous of, and sought advantages against, *ver. 9.* his countenance was not towards him as it had been. Proud men cannot endure to hear any praised but themselves, and think all the honour lost that goes by themselves. It is a sign the Spirit of God is departed from men, if they be peevish in their resentment of affronts, envious and suspicious of all about them, and ill-natured in their carriage, for the wisdom from above makes us quite otherwise.

3. In his fury he aimed to kill David, *ver. 10, 11.* *Jealousy is the rage of a man*, it made Saul outrageous against David, and impatient to get him out of the way.

1. His fits of phrenzy returned upon him. The very next day, after he conceived malice against David, the evil spirit from God, that had formerly haunted him, seized him again. Those that indulge themselves in envy and uncharitableness, give place to the devil, and prepare for the re-entry of the unclean spirit, with seven other more wicked. Where envy is, there is confusion. Saul pretended a religious ecstacy, *he prophesied in the midst of the house,*

i. e. he had the gestures and motions of a prophet, and humoured the thing well enough, to decoy David into a snare; and that he might be fearless of any danger, and off his guard; and, perhaps, designing, if he could but kill him, to impute it to a divine impulse, and to charge it upon the spirit of prophecy, with which he seemed to be animated: but really it was a hellish fury that acted him.

2. David, though advanced to a much higher post of honour, disdained not, for his master's service, to return to his harp. He *played with his hand as at other times.* Let not the highest think any thing below them, whereby they may do good, and be serviceable to those they are obliged to.

3. He took this opportunity to endeavour the death of David. A sword in a madman's hand is a dangerous thing, especially, such a madman as Saul was, that was mad with malice. Yet he had a javelin or dart in his hand, with which he projected, and endeavoured, to slay David; not in a sudden passion, but deliberately, *I will smite David to the wall with it*, with such a desperate force did he throw it. Justly doth David complain of his enemies, that they hated him with *a cruel hatred*, Psalm xxv. 19. No life so thought too precious to be sacrificed to malice. If a grateful sense of the great service David had done to the publick, could not assuage Saul's fury, yet one would think he should have allowed himself to consider the kindness he was now doing to himself, relieving him, so as no one else could, against the worst of troubles. Those are possessed with a devilish spirit indeed, that render evil for good. Compare David, with his harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the sweetness and usefulness of God's persecuted people, and the brutishness and barbarity of their persecutors. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul*, Prov. xxix. 18.

4. David happily avoided the blow twice, *viz.* now, and afterwards, *chap. xix. 10.* he did not throw the javelin at Saul again, withdrew, not fighting, but flying, for his own preservation; though he had both strength and courage enough, and colour of right, to make resistance, and revenge the injury, yet he did no more but secure himself, by getting out of the way of it. David, no doubt, had a watchful eye upon Saul's hand, and the javelin in it, and did as bravely in running from it, as he did lately in running upon Goliath. Yet his safety must be ascribed to the watchful eye of God's providence upon him, saving his servant from the hurtful sword; and, by this narrow escape, it seemed he was designed for something extraordinary.

12. ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. 13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways: and the LORD was with him. 15. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17. ¶ And Saul said to David, Behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles: for Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18. And David said unto Saul, Who *am I?* and what *is* my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king? 19. But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20. And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in *the one of the twain.* 22. And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law. 23. And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David: and David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed? 24. And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry; but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired. 27. Wherefore David arose

arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law: and Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. 28. ¶ And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. 29. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. 30. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth, and it came to pass after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by.

Saul had now, in effect, proclaimed war with David; he began in open hostility, when he threw the javelin at him; now we are here told, how his enmity proceeded, and how David received the attacks of it.

1. See how Saul expressed his malice against David.

1. He was *afraid of him*, ver. 12. perhaps, he pretended to be afraid, that David would do him mischief, to force his way to the crown. Those that design ill to others, are commonly willing to have it thought that ill is designed against them: but David's withdrawing, ver. 11. was a plain evidence that he was far from such a thought. However, he really stood in awe of him, as Herod feared John, *Mark vi. 11.* Saul was sensible that he had lost the favourable presence of God himself, and that David had it, and for this reason he feared him. Note, Those are truly great, and to be revered, that have God with them. The more *wisely David behaved himself*, the more *Saul feared him*, ver. 20. and again, ver. 29. Men think the way to be feared, is to huff, and hector, and threaten, which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good; whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror, and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is to *behave ourselves wisely*. Wisdom makes the face to shine, and commands respect.

2. He removed him from court, and gave him a regiment in the country, ver. 13. He made him captain over a thousand, that he might be from under his eye, because he hated the sight of him; and that he might not make an interest with the courtiers. Yet herein he did impolitically; for it gave David an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the people, who therefore *loved him*, ver. 16. because he *went out and came in before them*, i. e. he presided in the business of his country, civil as well as military, and gave universal satisfaction.

3. He stirred him up to take all occasions of quarrelling with the Philistines, and engaging them, ver. 17. insinuating to him, that hereby he would do good service to his prince; *be thou valiant for me*; and good service to his God; *fight the Lord's battles*; and a kindness to himself too, for hereby he would qualify himself for the honour he designed him, which was to marry his eldest daughter to him. This he had merited by killing Goliath, for it was promised by proclamation to him that should do that exploit, *chap. xvii. 25.* but David was so modest, as not to demand it, and now, when Saul proposed it, it was with design of mischief to him, to make him venture upon hazardous attempts, saying in his heart, *Let the hand of the Philistines be upon him*, hoping they would some time or other be the death of him; which yet how could he expect, when he saw that God was with him.

4. He did what he could to provoke him to discontent, and mutiny, by breaking his promise with him, and giving his daughter to another, when the time was come that she should have been given to him, ver. 19. This was as great an affront as he could possibly put upon him, and touched him, both in his honour and in his love; he therefore thought David's resentments of it would break out in some indecency or other, in word or deed, which might give him an advantage against him, to take him off by course of law. Thus evil men seek mischief.

5. When he was disappointed in this, he proffered him his other daughter, (who, it seems, had a secret kindness for David, ver. 20.) but with this design, that she may be *a snare to him*, ver. 21. (1.) Perhaps, he hoped that she would, even after her marriage to David, take part with her father against her husband, and give him an opportunity of doing him a diskindness. However, (2.) The conditions of the marriage he hoped would be his destruction; for (so zealous will Saul seem against the Philistines) the conditions of the marriage must be that he kill a hundred Philistines, and as proofs that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off; this would be a just reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision as it was an ordinance of God; and, perhaps, David doing this would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing Saul desired and designed, much more than to be avenged on the Philistines: *For Saul thought to make David fall by the Philistines*, ver. 25. See here (1.) What cheats bad men put upon themselves. Saul's conscience would not suffer him, except when the evil spirit was actually upon him, to aim at David's life himself, for even he could not but conceive an horror at the thought of murdering such an innocent and excellent person; but he thought designedly to ex-

pose him to the Philistines had nothing ill in it: *Let not my hand be upon him, but the hand of the Philistines*; whereas that malicious design against him was as truly murder, before God, as if he had slain him with his own hands. (2.) What cheats they put upon the world. Saul pretended a mighty kindness for David, even then when he aimed at his ruin and was actually plotting it: *Thou shalt be my son in law*, saith he, ver. 21. notwithstanding he hated him implacably. Perhaps David refers to this when, *Psal. lv. 21.* he speaks of his enemy, as one whose words were *smoother than butter, but war was in his heart*. It is probable, Saul's employing his servants to persuade David to enter into a treaty of a match with his daughter Michal, ver. 22. arose from an apprehension that either his having cheated him about his elder daughter, ver. 19. or the hardness of the terms he intended now to propose would make him decline it.

2. See how David carried himself, when the tide of Saul's displeasure runs thus high against him.

1. He *behaved himself wisely in all his ways*, ver. 14. He perceived Saul's jealousy of him, which made him very cautious and circumspect in every thing he said and did, and careful to give no offence: Did not complain of hard measure, nor make himself the head of a party, but managed all the affairs he was entrusted with, as one that had made it his business to do real service to his king and country, looking upon that to be the end of his preferment. And then *the Lord was with him* to give him success in all his undertakings. Though he contracted Saul's ill-will by it, yet he obtained God's favour. Compare this with *Psal. ci. 2.* where it is David's promise, *I will behave myself wisely*; and that promise he here performed; and it is his prayer, *O, when wilt thou come unto me!* And that prayer God here answered, *the Lord was with him*. However blind fortune may seem to favour fools, God will own and bless those that *behave themselves wisely*.

2. When it was proposed to him to be son in law to the king, he once and again received the proposal with all possible modesty and humility. When Saul proposed his elder daughter to him, ver. 18. he said, *Who am I, and what is my life?* When the courtiers proposed the younger, he took no notice of the affront Saul had given him, in disposing of the elder from him, but continued in the same mind, ver. 23. *seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?* He knew Michal loved him, and yet did not offer to improve his interest in her affections, for the gaining of her without her father's consent, but waited till it was proposed to him. And then see, (1.) How highly he speaks of the honour offered him. *To be son in law to the king*. Though this king was but an upstart, in his original as mean as himself, in his management no better than he should be, yet being a crowned head he speaks of him and the royal family with all due respect. Note, Religion is so far from teaching us, that it doth not allow us, to be rude and unmannered. We must *render honour to whom honour is due*. (2.) How humbly he speaks of himself. *Who am I!* This did not proceed from a mean, abject, sneaking spirit, when occasion was he made it to appear that he had as much a sense of honour as most men; nor was it from his jealousy of Saul, though he had reason enough to fear a snake under the green grass, but from his true and deep humility. *Who am I! a poor man and lightly esteemed!* David had as much reason as any man to value himself: He was of an ancient and honourable family of Judah, a comely person, a great statesman and soldier; his achievements great, for he had won Goliath's head and Michal's heart: he knew himself destined by the divine counsels to the throne of Israel, and yet *who am I! and what is my life!* Note, It well becomes us, however God has advanced us, always to have low thoughts of ourselves: *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. And if David thus magnified the honour of being son in law to the king, how highly then should we think of it to be sons (not in law, but in gospel) to the King of kings: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!* Who are we that we should be thus dignified!

3. When the slaying of an hundred Philistines was made the condition of David's marrying Saul's daughter he readily closed with it, ver. 26. *It pleased David well to be the king's son in law* upon those terms; and before the time given him for the action was expired he doubled the demand and slew two hundred, ver. 27. he would not seem to suspect that Saul designed his hurt by it, (though he had reason enough) but his honour rather, and therefore cheerfully undertook it, as became a brave soldier and a true lover, though we may suppose it uneasy to Michal. David hereby discovered likewise, (1.) A great confidence in the divine protection; he knew God was with him, and therefore, whatever Saul hoped, David did not fear falling by the Philistines, though he must needs expose himself much by such an undertaking as this. (2.) A great zeal for the good of his country, which he would not decline any occasion of doing service to, though with the hazard of his life. (3.) A right notion of honour, which consists not so much in being preferred as in deserving to be so. David was then pleased with the thoughts of being the king's son in law, when he found the honour set at this high price; being more solicitous how to merit it, than how to obtain it; nor could he wear it with satisfaction till he had won it.

4. Even

4. Even after he was married he continued his good services to Israel. When the princes of the Philistines began to move towards another war, David was ready to oppose them, and *behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul*, ver. 30. The law dispensed with men from going to war the first year after they were married, *Deut. xxiv. 5.* but David loved his country too well to make use of that dispensation. Many that have shewed themselves forward to serve the publick, when they have been in pursuit of preferment, have declined it when they have gained their point; but David acted from more generous principles.

Lastly, Observe how God brought good to David out of Saul's projects against him. (1.) Saul gave him his daughter to be a snare to him, but in this respect that marriage was a kindness to him, that his being Saul's son in law made his succeeding him much the less invidious, especially when so many of his sons were slain with him, *chap. xxxi. 2.* (2.) Saul thought, by putting him upon dangerous services, to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed his interest in the people; for the more he did against the Philistines the better they loved him, so that *his name was much set by*, ver. 30. which would make his coming to the crown the more easy. Thus God makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and serves his designs of kindness to his own people by it.

C H A P. XIX.

Immediately after David's marriage, which one would have hoped might have entituled him to Saul's good affection, we find his troubles coming upon him faster than ever, and Saul's enmity to him the cause of all. His death was vowed, and four fair escapes of his from the hurtful sword of Saul, we have an account of in this chapter. The first by the prudent mediation of Jonathan, ver. 1,—7. The second by his own quickness, ver. 8,—10. The third by Michal's fidelity, ver. 11,—17. The fourth by Samuel's protection, and a change for the present wrought upon Saul, ver. 18,—24. Thus God has many ways of preserving his people. Providence is never at a loss.

1. **A**ND Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.
2. But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thy self until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thy self: 3. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4. ¶ And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David: because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to theeward very good. 5. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? 6. And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As the LORD liveth*, he shall not be slain. 7. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things: and Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

1. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul: He spake to his son and all his servants *that they should kill David*, ver. 1. His projects to take him off had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an out-law, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice, when he could give no reason for it: and that knowing that all his servants loved him (for so he had said himself, *chap. xviii. 22.*) he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order. Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indited, and have suborned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Naboth was, by colour of law: but there is least danger from this undisguised malice. It was strange he who knew how well Jonathan loved him, should expect him to kill him; but he thought, because he was heir to the crown, he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And providence ordered it thus, that he might befriend David's safety.

2. Never was friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan. *A friend at need, is a friend indeed*: such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now the stream run so strong against him.

1. He took care for his present security, by letting him know his danger, *ver. 2. take heed to thy self*, and keep out of harm's way, Jonathan knew not but some of the servants might be either so obsequious to Saul, or so envious at David, as to put the orders in execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning he ventured to commune with him concerning David, *ver. 3.* not that night, either because he observed Saul to be drunk, and not fit to be spoken to, or because he hoped when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have opportunity of speaking to him till morning. His intercession for David was, (1.) Very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he shewed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, though he was in danger of incurring his father's displeasure by it. A rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads, 1. The good services David had done to the publick, and particularly to Saul: *His work has been to theeward very good*, ver. 4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp; and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom: he appeals to himself concerning that, *thou thy self sawest it and didst rejoice*. In that and other instances it appeared that David was a favourite of heaven, and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him *the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel*; so that to order him to be slain, was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God, and a great injury to the publick. 2. He pleads his innocency, though he had formerly done many good offices, yet if he had now been chargeable with any ill crimes it had been another matter, but *he has not sinned against thee*, ver. 4. his blood is innocent, ver. 5. and if he be slain it is without cause. And Jonathan had therefore reason to protest against it, because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood. (2.) His intercession being thus prudent was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken to the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproof and good advice even from our inferiors: parents from their own children. How forcible are right words? Saul was at the present so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David, that (1.) He recallesh the bloody warrant for his execution, *ver. 6. As the Lord liveth he shall not be slain*. Whether Saul swore here with due solemnity or no doth not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of that moment as to deserve it, and of that uncertainty as to need it; but at other times Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the validity of this oath justly questionable: for those that can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, it may be feared have not such a due sense of the obligation of it, but that to serve a turn they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, and that, at the same time, he intended to take the first opportunity to slay him: but, as bad as Saul was, we can scarce think so ill of him; and therefore suppose that he spake as he thought for the present, but the convictions soon wore off, and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them. (2.) He renewed the grant of his place at court: Jonathan brought him to Saul, and *he was in his presence as in times past*, ver. 7. hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

8. And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. 9. And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his hand*. 10. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence; and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

Here, 1. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness and decline publick service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be *weary in well doing*, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful.

Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him, (1.) As bold as ever in using his sword for the service of his country, *ver. 8.* The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself, it was with a great deal of bravery that he charged them and came off victorious, slew many and put the rest to flight. (2.) As chearful as ever in using his harp for the service of his prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy, *David played with his hand*, ver. 9. He might have pleaded that that was a piece of service now below him; but an humble good man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might

might have objected the danger he was in the last time he did this office for Saul, *chap. xviii. 10.* But he had learned to render good for evil, and to trust God with his safety in the way of his duty. See how David was affected when his enemy was sick, *Psal. xxxv. 13, 14.* which, perhaps, refers to Saul's sickness.

2. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker that he *should not be slain*, now endeavours to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable is the enmity of the seed of the serpent against that of the woman; so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, *Jer. xvii. 9.* The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill will to him and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more. And when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that *the evil spirit came upon him*, *ver. 9.* for when we *let the sun go down upon our wrath, we give place to the devil*, *Eph. iv. 26, 27.* we make room for him and invite him. Discomposures of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their original to mens own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it for his preservation, but designing it for David's destruction; for he endeavoured to nail him to the wall, running at him so violently that he struck the *javelin into the wall*, *ver. 10.* So strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought, if he had killed him now he had been excusable both before God and man, as being *non compos mentis*, and that it would have been imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

3. God continues his care of David, and still watcheth over him for good. Saul missed his blow, David was too quick for him and fled, and, by a kind providence, escaped that night. To these preservations, among others, David oft refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God's being his shield and buckler, his rock and fortress, and delivering his *soul from death*.

11. Saul also sent messengers unto Davids house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal Davids wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain. 12. ¶ So Michal let David down through a window: and he went and fled, and escaped. 13. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. 14. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. 15. And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. 16. And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was* an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats hair for his bolster. 17. And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Here is, 1. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When he had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, he sent some of his guards after him to lay wait at the door of his house, and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, *ver. 11.* Josephus saith, the design was to seize him, and to hurry him before a court of justice, that was ordered to condemn him, and put him to death as a traitor; but we are here told it was a shorter way they were to take with him, they were ordered to *slay him*. Well might David complain that his enemies were *bloody men*, as he did in the Psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion, *Psal. lix.* When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See *ver. 2, 3.* and 7. he complains that *swords were in their lips*. 2. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger; Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave him to be a snare to him, but she proved his protector and helper; oft is the devil out-shot in his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger her husband was in doth not appear; perhaps she had notice sent her from court, or rather, was herself aware of the soldiers about the house when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent that they said, *Who doth hear?* which David takes notice of in that Psalm, *ver. 7.* She knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design and bestirred herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was, *ver. 11.* *To morrow thou wilt be slain.* That (as Josephus paraphrases it) if the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then put him in a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and, had it been lawful, it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it; but *Michal let him down through a window*, *ver. 12.* all the doors being guarded, and so he *fled and escaped*. And now it was, that

No. 21.

either in his own closet, before he went, or in the hiding place to which he fled, he penned that fifty ninth Psalm: which shews, that, in this fright and hurry, his mind was composed, and in this great danger his faith was strong and fixed on God; and whereas the plot was to slay him *in the morning*, he speaks there with the greatest assurance, *ver. 16.* *I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.*

2. She put a sham upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him; and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed, *ver. 14.* and if they would not believe her they might see, for, *ver. 13.* she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapt it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, not in a condition to be spoken to: the goats hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, the better to impose upon them. Michal can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat; God's truth needed not her lie: but she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while that David might have time to secure himself, not doubting but those messengers would pursue him, if they found he was gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance, when they heard he was sick; for to them that are in that misery pity should be shewn; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him sick or well, *ver. 15.* *Bring him to me in the bed, that I may slay him.* It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to vow the death of one that, for ought he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead, unless he himself were the death of him; though a while ago he had said, *Let not mine hand be upon him*. Thus when men lay the reins in the neck of their passions, they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again the cheat was discovered, *ver. 16.* But by this time, it was to be hoped, David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David away, *ver. 17.* *Why hast thou deceived me so?* What a base spirit was Saul of to expect, that because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly? Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house, to cleave to her husband? Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion, are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation, as she had been of his person, when she makes this her excuse, *He said, Let me go, why should I kill thee?* As her insinuating, that she would have hindered his flight was false, it was she that put him upon it and furthered it; so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him to suggest that he threatened to kill her if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man, and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves, and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the son of David.

18. ¶ So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him: and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. 19. And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. 20. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise: and Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. 22. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. 23. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah: 24. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

Here is, 1. David's place of refuge. Being got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Beth-lehem to his relations, or to any of the cities of Israel that had caressed and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preservation; but he ran straight to Samuel, and told him all that Saul had done to him, *ver. 18.* (1.) Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown, and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste, (or, *in his flight*, as some read it,

Pfal. cxvi. 11. all men are liars, (not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel himself that promised me the throne) whither should he go but to Samuel for such encouragements, in this day of distress, as would support his faith. In flying to Samuel he made God his refuge, trusting in the shadow of his wings; where else can a good man think himself safe? (2.) Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the Psalm he penned the night before he had lift up his prayer to God, and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel, to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers; we must have our ears open to God's word. (3.) Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets, with whom he might join in praising God; and the pleasure of that would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress. He met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, and therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world, they have it that live a life of communion with God; to that David retired in the time of trouble, *Pfal. xxvii. 4, 5, 6.*

2. David's protection in this place. *He and Samuel went and dwelt* (or, *lodged*) in *Naioth*, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, as in a privileged place, for the Philistines themselves would not disturb that meeting, *chap. x. 10.* But Saul having notice of it by some of his spies, *ver. 19.* sent officers to seize David, *ver. 20.* and when those did not bring him, sent more; and when those returned not, sent the third time, *ver. 21.* and when he heard not tidings of those, went himself, *ver. 22.* So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, though he saw it baffled by one providence after another, but could not perceive David under the special protection of heaven. It was below the king to go himself on such an errand as this, but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all publick business to hunt David. Now how was David delivered when he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lions? Not as he delivered his lamb by slaying the lions, or as Elijah was delivered by consuming the messengers with fire from heaven, but by turning the lions, for the present, into lambs.

1. The messengers, when they came into the congregation where David was among the prophets, the spirit of God came upon them, and they prophesied, i. e. they joined with the rest in praising God. Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. And thus, (1.) God secured David: for either they were put into such an ecstasy, by the spirit of prophecy, that they could not think of any thing else at all, and so forgot their errand, and never minded David: or, they were by it put, for the present, into so good a frame, that they could not entertain the thought of doing so ill a thing. (2.) He put an honour upon the sons of the prophets, and the communion of saints, and shewed how he can, when he pleaseth, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies of the faithful, and force them to acknowledge, that *God is with them of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on minds that seemed unapt to receive such impressions. And where may the influences of the spirit be expected, but in the congregations of the saints? (3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men. He that made the heart and tongue can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied of the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy before he came to the place. One would have thought so ill a man as he had been, in no danger of being turned into a prophet; yet when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul is no sooner come (as bishop Hall expresseth it) within smell of the smoke of *Naioth* but he prophesieth, as his messengers did, *ver. 23.* He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habiliments, because they were either too fine, or too heavy for this service, and fell into a trance, as it should seem, or into a rapture, which continued all that day and night. The saints at Damascus were delivered from the rage of the New Testament Saul, by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying. This for a day, that for ever. Note, Many have great gifts, and yet no grace; prophecy in Christ's name, and yet are disowned by him, *Matt. vii. 22.* Now the proverb recurs, *Is Saul among the prophets?* See *chap. x. 12.* Then it was different from what it had been, but now contrary. He is rejected of God and acted by an evil spirit, and yet among the prophets.

C H A P. XX.

David having several times narrowly escaped Saul's fury, begins to consider at last, whether it were not necessary for him to retire into the country, and to take up arms in his own defence. But he will not do so daring a thing without consulting his faithful friend Jonathan; how that was done, and what passed between them, we have an account in this chapter, where we have as surprising instances of supernatural love, as we had in the chapter before of unnatural hatred. (1.) David complains to Jonathan of his pre-

sent distress, and engageth him to be his friend, *ver. 1,—8.* (2.) Jonathan faithfully promiseth to get and give him intelligence how his father stood affected to him, and renews the covenant of friendship with him, *v. 9,—23.* (3.) Jonathan, upon trial, finds, to his grief, that his father was implacably enraged against David, *ver. 24,—34.* (4.) He gives David notice of this, according to the appointment between them, *ver. 35,—42.*

1. AND David fled from *Naioth* in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? 2. And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. 3. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. 4. Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. 5. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new-moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide my self in the field unto the third day at even. 6. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me, that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. 7. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. 8. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thy self; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

Here, 1. David makes a remonstrance to Jonathan of his present troubles. While Saul lay bound by his trance at *Naioth* David escaped to the court and got to speak with Jonathan. And it was happy for him that he had such a friend at court, when he had such an enemy on the throne. If there be those that hate and despise us, yet let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us: God hath set the one over against the other, and so must we. Jonathan was a friend that loved at all times; loved David as well now in distress, and bid him as welcome into his arms, as he had done when he was in his triumph, *chap. xviii. 1.* and he was a brother that was born for adversity, *Prov. xvii. 17.* Now, 1. David appeals to Jonathan himself concerning his innocency, and he needed not say much to him for the proof of that, only desires him, if he knew of any just offence he had given his father he would tell him, that he might humble himself and beg his pardon. *What have I done?* *ver. 1.* 2. He endeavours to convince him, that, notwithstanding his innocency, Saul sought his life. Jonathan, from a principle of filial respect to his father, was very loth to believe that he designed, or would ever do so ill a thing, *ver. 2.* He the rather hoped so, because he knew nothing of any such design he had; and he used to make him privy to all his counsels. Jonathan, as became a dutiful son, endeavoured to cover his father's shame, as far as was consistent with justice and fidelity to David. Charity is not forward to think evil of any, especially of a parent, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. David therefore gives him the assurance of an oath concerning his own danger, swears the peace upon Saul, that he was in fear of his life by him, *As the Lord liveth*, than which nothing more sure in itself; and as *thy soul liveth*, than which nothing more certain to thee; whatever thou thinkest, *there is but a step between me and death*, *ver. 3.* And as for Saul's concealing it from Jonathan it was easy to account for that, he knew the friendship between him and David; and therefore, though in other things he advised with him, yet not in that. None more fit than Jonathan to serve him in every design that was just and honourable, but he knew him to be a man of more virtue than to be his confidant in so base a design as the murder of David.

2. Jonathan generously offers him his service, *ver. 4.* *Whatsoever thou desirest*, (he needed not insert the proviso of lawful and honest, for he knew David too well to think he would ask any thing that was otherwise) *I will even do it for thee.* This is true friendship. Thus Christ testifies his love to us, *Ask, and it shall be done for you*; and we must testify ours to him, by keeping his commandments.

3. David only desires him to satisfy himself, and then to satisfy him, whether Saul did really design his death or no. Perhaps, David proposed this, more for Jonathan's conviction than his own, for he himself was well satisfied.

1. The method of trial he proposeth was very natural, and would certainly discover how Saul stood affected to him. The two next

next days Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were offered, and feasts made upon the sacrifices. Saul was rejected of God, and the spirit of the Lord was departed from him, and yet he kept up his observance of the holy feasts. There may be the remains of external devotion, where there is nothing but the ruins of real virtue. At these solemn feasts, Saul had either all his children to sit with him, and David had a seat as one of them; or all his great officers, and David had a seat as one of them. However it was, David resolved his seat should be empty (and that it never used to be at a sacred feast) those *two days*, ver. 5. and he would abscond till the solemnity was over; and put it upon this issue; if Saul admitted an excuse for his absence, and dispensed with it, he would conclude he had changed his mind, and was reconciled to him; but if he repented it, and was put into a passion by it, it was easy to conclude he designed him a mischief, since it was certain, he did not love him so well, as to desire his presence for any other end, but that he might have opportunity to do him a mischief, ver. 7.

2. The excuse he desires Jonathan to make for his absence, we have reason to think was true; that he was invited, by his elder brother, to Beth-lehem, his own city, to celebrate this new moon with his relations there, because, beside the monthly solemnity, in which they held communion with all Israel, they had now a yearly sacrifice, and a holy feast upon it, for *all the family*, ver. 6. They kept a day of thanksgiving in their family for the comforts they enjoyed, and of prayer for the continuance of them. By this it appears, that the family David was of, was a very religious family, a house that had a church in it.

3. The arguments he uses with Jonathan to persuade him to do this kindness for him, are very pressing, ver. 8. 1. That he had entered into a league of friendship with him, and it was Jonathan's own proposal. *Thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee.* 2. That he would by no means urge him to espouse his cause, if he were not sure that it was a righteous cause; *if there be iniquity in me: I am so far from desiring or expecting, that the covenant between us, should bind thee to be a confederate with me in that iniquity, that I freely release thee from it, and wish that thy hand may be first upon me: slay me thyself.* No honest man will urge his friend, to do a dishonest thing for his sake.

9. And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly, that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? 10. Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? 11. ¶ And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. 12. And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father, about to-morrow any time, or the third day, and behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; 13. The LORD do so, and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. 14. And thou shalt not only while yet I live, shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not. 15. But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth. 16. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of Davids enemies. 17. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. 18. Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow is the new-moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 19. And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself, when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. 20. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. 21. And behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. 22. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee: go thy way, for the LORD hath sent thee away. 23. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.

Here, 1. Jonathan protests his fidelity to David in his distress. Notwithstanding the mighty confidence David had in Jonathan, yet, because he might have some reason to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest, should make him warp, or grow cool towards him, Jonathan thought it requisite, solemnly to renew the professions of his friendship to him, ver. 9. *Far be it from thee, to think that I suspect thee of any crime, for which I should either slay thee my self, or deliver thee to my father: no, if thou hast any jealousy of that, Come, let us go into the field*, ver. 11. and talk it over more fully. He doth not challenge him to the field to fight him for an affront, but to fix him in his friendship. He faithfully promiseth him, that he would let him know how, upon trial, he found his father affected towards him, and would make the matter neither better nor worse than it was. If there be *good towards thee*, I will *shew it thee*, that thou mayest be easy, ver. 12. if evil, I will *send thee away*, that thou mayest be safe, ver. 13. and thus would help to deliver him from the evil, if it were real, and from the fear of evil, if it were but imaginary. For the confirmation of this promise he appeals to God, 1. As a witness, ver. 12. *O Lord God of Israel*, thou knowest I mean sincerely, and think as I speak. The strength of his passion, made the manner of his speaking concise and abrupt. 2. As a judge. *The Lord do so, and much more, to Jonathan*, ver. 13. if I deal deceitfully, or break my word with my friend: he expresseth himself thus solemnly, that David might be abundantly assured of his sincerity. And thus God has confirmed his promises to us; that we might have *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Jonathan adds to his protestations his hearty prayers, *The Lord be with thee*, to protect and prosper thee, *as he hath been formerly with my father*, though now he be withdrawn. This intimates his belief, that David would be in his father's place, and his good wishes, that he might prosper in it, better than his father now did.

2. He provides for the entail of the covenant of friendship with David, upon his posterity, ver. 14, 15, 16. he engageth David to be a friend to his family, when he was gone, ver. 15. *Thou shalt promise, that thou wilt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever.* This he spoke from a natural affection he had to his children, whom he desired it might go well with when he was gone, and for whose future welfare he desired to improve his present interest. It also speaks his firm belief of David's advancement, and that it would be in the power of his hand to do a kindness or dis-kindness to his seed; for, in process of time, *the Lord would cut off all his enemies*, Saul himself not excepted; then *do not thou cut off thy kindness from my house*, nor revenge my father's wrongs upon my children. The house of David must likewise be bound to the house of Jonathan, from generation to generation: he *made a covenant*, ver. 16. *with the house of David.* Note, True friends cannot but covet to transmit to theirs after them their mutual affections. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.* This kindness, 1. He calls the kindness of God, because it is such kindness as God shews to those whom he takes into covenant with himself; for he is a God to them, and to their seed: they are *beloved for the fathers sake*. 2. He secures it by an imprecation, ver. 16. *The Lord require it at the hand of David's seed* (for of David himself he had no suspicion) if they prove so far *David's enemies*, as to deal wrongfully with the posterity of Jonathan, David's friend. He feared lest David, or some of his, should hereafter be tempted, for the clearing and confirming of their title to the throne, to do by his seed, as Abimelech had done by the sons of Gideon, *Judg. ix. 5.* and this he would effectually prevent; but the reason given, ver. 17. why Jonathan was so earnest to have the friendship entailed, is purely generous, and has nothing of self in it; it was because *he loved him as he loved his own soul*, and therefore desired that he and his might be loved by him. David, though now in disgrace at court, and in distress, was as amiable in the eyes of Jonathan as ever he had been; and he loved him never the less for his father's hating him: so pure were the principles on which his friendship was built. Having himself sworn to David, he caused David to swear to him, and (as we read it) to swear again, which David consented to; for he that bears an honest mind doth not startle at assurances; to swear by his love to him, which he looked upon as a sacred thing. Jonathan's heart was so much upon it, that when they parted this time, he concludes with a solemn appeal to God, *The Lord be between me and thee for ever*, ver. 23. i. e. God himself be judge between us and our families for ever, if on either side this league of friendship be violated. It was in remembrance of this covenant that David was kind to Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. ix. 7. xxi. 7. It will be a kindness to our selves and ours, to secure an interest in those whom God favours, and to make his friends ours.

3. He settles the method of intelligence, and by what signs and tokens he would give him notice how his father stood affected towards him. He would be missed the first day, or at least the second day, of the new moon, and would be enquired after, ver. 18. On the third day, by which time he would be returned from Beth-lehem, he must be at such a place, ver. 19. and Jonathan would come towards that place with his bow and arrows to shoot for diversion, ver. 20. would send his lad to fetch his arrows, and if shot short of the lad, David must take it for a signal, and not be afraid to shew his head, ver. 21. but if he shot beyond the lad, it

was a signal of danger, and he must shift for his safety, *ver.* 22. This expedient he fixed, lest he should not have the opportunity, which yet it proved he had, of talking with him, and the making report by word of mouth.

24. ¶ So David hid himself in the field : and when the new-moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. 25. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall : and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and Davids place was empty. 26. Nevertheless, Saul spake not any thing that day : for he thought, Some thing hath befallen him, he *is* not clean ; surely he *is* not clean. 27. And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second day of the month, that Davids place was empty : and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to day ? 28. And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me, to go to Beth-lehem : 29. And he said, Let me go, I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city, and my brother, he hath commanded me *to be there* ; and now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren : Therefore he cometh not unto the kings table. 30. Then Sauls anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness ? 31. For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom : wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. 32. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain ? what hath he done ? 33. And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him : whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. 34. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month : for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Jonathan is here effectually convinced of that which he was lothe to believe, that his father had an implacable enmity to David, and would certainly be the death of him if it were in his power ; and he had like to have paid very dear himself for the conviction.

1. David is missed from the feast on the first day, but nothing is said of him. *The king sat upon his seat*, to feast upon the peace-offerings, *as at other times*, *ver.* 25. and yet had his heart as full of envy and malice against David as it would hold : he should first have been reconciled to him, and then come and offered his gift ; but, instead of that, he hoped at this feast to drink the blood of David. What an abomination was that sacrifice, which was brought with such a wicked mind as this ! *Prov.* xxi. 27. When the king came to take his seat, Jonathan arose, in reverence to him, both as his father, and as his sovereign ; every one knew his place, but David's was empty. It did not use to be so. None more constant than he in attending holy duties ; nor had he been absent now, but that he must have come in peril of his life ; self-preservation obliged him to withdraw. In imminent peril present opportunities may be waved, nay, we ought not to throw our selves into the mouth of danger. Christ himself absconded often, till he knew that his hour was come. But that day Saul took no notice that he missed David, but said within himself, *Surely he is not clean*, *ver.* 26. Some ceremonial pollution has befallen him, which forbids him to eat of the holy things, till he has *washed his clothes, and bathed his flesh in water, and been unclean until the even*. Saul knew what conscience David made of the law, and that he would rather keep away from the holy feast, than come in his uncleanness. Blessed be God, no uncleanness is now a restraint upon us, but what we may by faith and repentance be washed from, in the fountain opened, *Psal.* xxvi. 6.

2. He is enquired for the second day, *ver.* 27. Saul asked Jonathan, who he knew was his confidant, *Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat*. He was his own son by marriage, but he calls him in disdain the son of Jesse. He asks for him, as if he were not pleased that he should be absent from a religious feast ; and so it would be an example to masters of families to see to it, that those under their charge be not absent from the worship of God, either in publick or in the family. It is an ill thing for us, except in case of necessity, to omit any opportunity of our stated attendance on God in solemn ordinances. Thomas lost a sight of Christ, by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples. But that which displeased Saul was, that hereby he missed an opportunity, he expected, to do David a mischief.

3. Jonathan makes his excuse, *ver.* 28, 29. 1. That he was

absent upon a good occasion ; keeping the feast in another place, though not here ; sent for by his elder brother, who was now more respectful to him than he had been, *chap.* xvii. 28. and that he was gone to pay his respects to his relations, for the keeping up of brotherly love : and no master would deny a servant liberty to do that in due time. He pleads, 2. That he did not go without leave, humbly asked and obtained from Jonathan, who, as his superior officer, was proper to be applied to for it. Thus he represents David, as not wanting in any instance of respect and duty to the government.

4. Saul, hereupon, breaks out into a most extravagant passion, and rages like a lion disappointed of his prey. David was out of his reach, but he falls foul upon Jonathan for his sake, *ver.* 30, 31. gave him base language, not fit for a gentleman, a prince to give to any man, especially to his own son, heir apparent to his crown, a son that served him, the greatest stay and ornament of his family, before a deal of company, at a feast when all should be in good humour, at a sacred feast, by which all irregular passions should be mortified and subdued ; yet he doth, in effect, call him, 1. A bastard : *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman* ; that is, according to the foolish filthy language of mens brutish passion now a day, Thou son of a whore. He tells him he was born *to the confusion of his mother*, i. e. he had given the world cause to suspect, that he was not the legitimate son of Saul, because he loved him whom Saul hated, and supported him who would be the destruction of their family. 2. A traitor. *Thou son of perverse rebellion*, so the word is, i. e. thou perverse rebel. At other times he reckoned no counsellor or commander he had more trusty and well-beloved, than Jonathan ; yet now, in his passion, he represents him as dangerous to his crown and life. 3. A fool. *Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse for thy friend, to thy own confusion*, for while he lives, *thou shalt never be established*. Jonathan, indeed, did wisely and well for himself and family, to secure an interest in David, whom heaven had destined to the throne, yet for this he is branded as most impolitick. It is good taking God's people for our people, and going with those that have him with them, and will prove to our advantage at last, however, for the present, it may be thought a disparagement, and a prejudice, to our secular interest. It is probable, Saul knew that David was anointed to the kingdom, by the same hand that anointed him, and then, not Jonathan, but himself, was the fool, to think to defeat the counsels of God. Yet nothing will serve him, but David must die, and Jonathan must fetch him to execution. See how ill Saul's passion looks, and let it warn us against the indulgence of any thing like in our selves. Anger is madness, and *he that hates his brother is a murderer*.

5. Jonathan is sorely grieved, and put into disorder, by his father's barbarous passion ; and the more, because he had hoped better things, *ver.* 2. He was troubled for his father, that he should be such a brute ; troubled for his friend, and whom he knew to be a friend of God, that he should be so basely abused ; he was *grieved for David*, *ver.* 34. and troubled for himself too, because *his father had done him shame*, and, though most unjustly, yet he must submit to it. One would pity Jonathan, to see how he was put, 1. Into the peril of sin. Much ado that wise and good man had to keep his temper, upon such a provocation as this. His father's reflections upon himself he made no return to ; it becomes inferiors to bear with meekness and silence the contempts put upon them in wrath and passion. *When thou art the anvil lie thou still*. But his dooming David to death he could not bear, to that he replied with some heat, *ver.* 32. *Wherefore shall he be slain ? What has he done ?* Generous spirits can much easier bear to be abused themselves, than to hear their friends abused. 2. Into the peril of death. Saul was now so outrageous, that he threw his javelin at Jonathan, *ver.* 33. In great care he seemed to be, *ver.* 31. that Jonathan should be established in his kingdom, and yet now he himself aims at his life. What fools, what savage beasts, and worse, doth anger make men ! How necessary is it to put a hook in its nose, and a bridle in its jaws ! Jonathan was fully satisfied that evil was determined against David, which put him out of frame exceedingly : he *rose from table*, as it was time when his life was struck at, and *would eat no meat*, for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning. All the guests we may suppose were discomposed, and the mirth of the feast spoiled. *He that is cruel, troubles his own flesh*, *Prov.* xi. 17.

35. ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field, at the time appointed, with David, and a little lad with him. 36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is not the arrow beyond thee ?* 38. And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathans lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39. But the lad knew not any thing : only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and

and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city. 41. ¶ And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the fouth, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times : and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. 42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed : and Jonathan went into the city.

Here is, 1. Jonathan's faithful performance of his promise, to give David notice of the success of his dangerous experiment. He went at the time, and to the place, appointed, *ver.* 35. within sight of which he knew David lay hid ; sent his footboy to fetch his arrows, which he would shoot at random, *ver.* 36. gave David the fatal signal, by shooting an arrow beyond the lad, *ver.* 37. *Is not the arrow beyond thee ?* That word [beyond] David knew the meaning of, better than the lad. Jonathan dismissed the lad, who knew nothing of the matter, and finding the coasts clear, and no danger of a discovery, he presumed upon one minute's personal conversation with David, after he had bid him flee for his life.

2. The most sorrowful parting of these two friends, who, for ought appears, never came together again, but once, and that was by stealth, *in a wood*, chap. xxiii. 16. 1. David addressed himself to Jonathan with the reverence of a servant, rather than the freedom of a friend ; he *fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times*, as one deeply sensible of his obligations to him, for the good services he had done him. 2. They took leave of each other with the greatest affection imaginable, with kisses and tears, they wept on each others neck *till David exceeded*, *ver.* 41. The separation of two such faithful lovers was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable ; for, when Jonathan was returning to his family and friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's ; or, perhaps, it was because his temper was more tender, and his passions stronger. 3. They referred themselves to the covenant of friendship that was between them, both of them comforting themselves with that, in this mournful separation, *we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord*, for our selves and our heirs, that we and they will be faithful and kind to each other, from generation to generation. Thus, while we are at home in the body, and absent from the Lord, this is our comfort, that he has *made with us an everlasting covenant*.

C H A P. XXI.

David has now quite taken leave, both of Saul's court, and of his camp ; has bid farewell to his Alter idem, the beloved Jonathan ; and, from henceforward, to the end of this book, he is looked upon, and treated, as an outlaw, and proclaimed traitor ; we still find him shifting from place to place for his own safety, and Saul pursuing him. His troubles are very particularly related in this and the following chapters, not only to be a key to the psalms, but that he might be, as other prophets, an example, to the saints in all ages, of suffering affliction, and of patience ; and, especially, that he might be a type of Christ, who, being anointed to the kingdom, humbled himself, and was therefore highly exalted. But the example of the suffering Jesus was a copy without a blot, that of David was not so, witness the records of this chapter, where we find David, in his flight, 1. Imposing upon Ahimelech the priest, to get from him both victuals and arms, *ver.* 1.—9. 2. Imposing upon Achish, king of Gath, by feigning himself mad, *ver.* 10.—15. Justly are troubles called temptations, for many are by them drawn into sin.

1. **T**HEN came David to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest : and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee ? 2. And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee : and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 3. Now therefore what is under thine hand ? Give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 4. And the priest answered David, and said, *There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread ; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.* 5. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth, women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is in a manner common*, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6. So the priest gave him hallowed bread ; for there was no bread there, but the shew-bread that was

taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. 7. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul, *was* there that day, detained before the LORD ; and his name *was* Doeg an Edomite, the chiefest of the herd-men that *belonged* to Saul. 8. ¶ And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword ? for I have neither brought my sword, nor my weapons with me, because the kings business required haste. 9. And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is *here* wrapt in a cloth behind the ephod : if thou wilt take that, take it : for *there is* no other save that, here. And David said, *There is none like that*, give it me.

Here, 1. David, in distress, flies to the tabernacle of God, now pitched at Nob, supposed to be a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Since Shiloh was forsaken, the tabernacle often flitted, though the ark still remained at Kirjath-jearim. Hither David came in his flight from Saul's fury, *ver.* 1. and applied himself to Ahimelech the priest. Samuel the prophet could not protect him, Jonathan the prince could not, he therefore has recourse next to Ahimelech the priest. He foresees he must now be an exile, and therefore comes to the tabernacle, 1. To take dear leave of it, for he knows not when he shall see it again, and nothing will be more afflictive to him in his banishment, than his distance from the house of God, and his restraint from publick ordinances ; as appears by many of his psalms. He had given an affectionate farewell to his friend Jonathan, and cannot go till he has given the like to the tabernacle. 2. To enquire of the Lord there, and to beg direction from him, in the way both of duty and safety ; his case being difficult and dangerous. That this was his business, appears, *chap.* xxii. 10. where it is said, that *Ahimelech enquired of the Lord for him*, as he had done formerly, *ver.* 15. It is a great comfort to us in a day of trouble, that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our case, and from whom we may ask and expect direction.

2. Ahimelech the priest is surprized to see him in so poor an equipage ; having heard that he was fallen into disgrace at court, he looked shy upon him, as most are apt to do upon their friends when the world frowns upon them. He was afraid of incurring Saul's displeasure by entertaining him ; and took notice how mean a figure he now made, to what he used to make. *Why art thou alone ?* He had some with him, as appears, *Mark* ii. 26. but they were only his own servants, he had none of the courtiers, no persons of quality with him, as he used to have at other times, when he came to enquire of the Lord. He saith, *Psalms* xlii. 4. he was wont to go with a multitude to the house of God, and having now but two or three with him, Ahimelech might well ask, *Why art thou alone ?* He that was suddenly advanced from the solitude of a shepherd's life, to the crowds and hurries of the camp, is now as soon reduced to the desolate condition of an exile, and is *alone like a sparrow on the house-top*. Such changes are there in this world, and so uncertain are its smiles ! Those that are courted to day, may be deserted to morrow.

3. David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon publick services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, *ver.* 2, 3. Here David did not carry it like himself, he told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to dispatch, that his attendants were dismissed to such a place, and that he was charged secrecy, and therefore durst not communicate it, no not to the priest himself. This was nothing so ; it was all false ; What shall we say to this ? The scripture doth not conceal it, and we dare not justify it : it was ill done, and proved of ill consequence ; for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it afterwards with regret, *chap.* xxii. 22. It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for, we may suppose, if he had told him the truth, he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him, and enquire of God for him. People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus foully through fear and cowardise, and both owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this, for his own preservation. It is written, not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest streights, but for our admonition. *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall ;* and let us all pray daily, Lord, *Lead us not into temptation*. Let us all take occasion from this to lament, 1. The weakness and infirmity of good men ; the best are not perfect on this side heaven. It is possible, there may be true grace, where yet there are many failings. 2. The wickedness of bad times, which forceth good men into such streights, as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppression makes a wise man do foolishly.

Two things David begged of Ahimelech, bread and a sword.

1. He wanted bread. *Five loaves*, *ver.* 3. Travelling was then troublesome, when men generally carried their provisions with them in specie, having little money, and no publick houses ; else David had not now been to seek for bread. It seems David had known

the seed of the righteous begging bread, occasionally, but not constantly, *Psalms* xxxvii. 25.

Now, (1.) The priest objected that he had none but hallowed bread, shew-bread, which had stood a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and was taken thence for the use of the priests, and their families, *ver.* 4. It seems the priests kept no good house, but wanted either a heart to be hospitable, or rather provisions where-withal. Ahimelech thinks the young men that attended David might not eat of this bread, unless they had for some time abstained from women, even from their own wives; this was required at the giving of the law, *Exod.* xix. 15. but otherwise, we never find this made the matter of any ceremonial purity on the one side, or pollution on the other. And therefore the priest here seems to be over-nice, not to say superstitious.

(2.) David pleads, that he and they that were with him, in this case of necessity, might lawfully eat of the hallowed bread, for they were not only able to answer his terms of keeping from women for three days past, but that *the vessels*, i. e. the bodies, of the young men were holy, being possessed in sanctification and honour at all times, *1 Thess.* iv. 4, 5. and therefore God would take particular care of them, that they wanted not necessary supports, and would have his priest to do so. And being thus holy, holy things were not forbidden to them. Poor and pious Israelites were, in effect, priests to God, and, rather than be starved, might feed on the bread which was appropriated to the priests. Believers are spiritual priests, and the offerings of the Lord shall be their inheritance; they eat the bread of their God. He pleads, that the bread is in a manner common, now that which was primarily the religious use of it was over; especially, (as our margin reads it) *when there is this day other bread (bet, ver. 6.) sanctified this day in the vessel*, and put in the room of it upon the table. This was David's plea, and the son of David approves it, and shews from it, that mercy is to be preferred before sacrifice: that ritual observances must give way to moral duties; and that that may be done in a case of an urgent providential necessity, which may not otherwise be done. He brings it to justify his disciples, in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, for which the Pharisees censured them, *Matt.* xii. 3, 4.

(3.) Ahimelech hereupon supplies him. *He gave him hallowed bread*, *ver.* 6. and some think, it was about this that *he enquired of the Lord*, chap. xxii. 10. as a faithful servant, he would not dispose of his master's provisions, without his master's leave. This bread, we may suppose, was the more agreeable to David for its being hallowed, so precious were all sacred things to him. The shew-bread was but twelve loaves in all, yet out of this he gives David five, *ver.* 3. though they had no more in the house; but he trusted providence.

2. He wanted a sword. Persons of quality, though officers of the army, did not then wear their swords so constantly as now they do, else, sure David had not been without one; it was wonder Jonathan did not furnish him with his, as he had done, *chap.* xviii.

4. However it happened, he had now no weapons with him, the reason of which he pretends to be, because he came away in haste, *ver.* 8. those that are furnished with the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, cannot be disarmed of them, nor need they be to seek, or out of the way at any time. But the priests, it seems, had no swords, the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, there was not a sword to be found about the tabernacle, but the sword of Goliath, which was laid up behind the ephod, as a monument of that glorious victory David obtained over him; probably, David had an eye to that, when he asked the priest to help him with a sword; for that being mentioned, O! saith he, *there is none like that, give it me*, *ver.* 9. He could not use Saul's armour, for he had not proved it; but this sword of Goliath he had made trial of, and done execution with; by this it appears he was now well grown in strength and stature, that he could wear and wield such a sword as that. God had taught his hands to war, so that he could do wonders, *Psalms* xviii. 34. Two things we may observe concerning this sword. 1. That God had graciously given it him, as a pledge of his singular favour; so that whenever he drew it, nay, whenever he looked upon it, it would be a great support to his faith, by bringing to mind that great instance of the particular care and countenance of the divine providence he was then under. Experiences are great encouragements. 2. That he had gratefully given it back to God, dedicating it to him, and to his honour, as a token of his thankfulness; and now in his distress it stood him in mighty stead. Note, What we devote to God's praise, and serve him with, is most likely to rebound, one way or other, to our own comfort and benefit. What we gave we have.

Thus was David well furnished with arms and victuals, but it fell out very unhappily, that there was one of Saul's servants then attending before the Lord, Doeg by name, that proved a base traitor, both to David and to Ahimelech. He was by birth an Edomite, *ver.* 7. and though professed to the Jewish religion, to get the preferment he now had under Saul, yet he retained the ancient and hereditary enmity of Edom to Israel. He was master of the herds, which, perhaps, was then a place of as much honour as master of the horse is now. Some occasion or other he had at this time to wait on the priest, either to be purified from some pollution, or to pay some vow; but, whatever his business was, it is said, he was *detained before the Lord*. He must attend, and could not help it,

but he was sick of the service, *snuffed at it*, and said, *What a weariness is it!* *Mal.* i. 13. He would rather have been any where else than before the Lord, and therefore, instead of minding the business he came about, was plotting to do David a mischief, and to be revenged on Ahimelech for detaining him. God's sanctuary could never secure it self from such wolves in sheep's clothing. See *Gal.* ii. 4.

10. 5 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? 12. And David laid up these words in his heart, and was fore afraid of Achish the king of Gath: 13. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, you see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? 15. Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into mine house?

David, though king elect, is here an exile: designed to be master of vast treasures, yet had been just now begging his bread: appointed to the crown, and yet here forced to run his country: thus do God's providences sometimes seem to run counter to his promises, for the trial of his peoples faith, and the glorifying of his name, in the accomplishment of his counsels, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in the way. Here is,

1. David's flight into the land of the Philistines, where he hoped to be hid, and to remain *incognito*, in the court or camp of Achish, king of Gath, *ver.* 10. Israel's darling is necessitated to quit the land of Israel, and he that was the Philistines great enemy, upon I know not what inducements, goes to seek for shelter among them. It should seem, that as though the Israelites loved him, yet the king of Israel had a personal enmity to him, which obliged him to leave his own country; so, though the Philistines hated him, yet the king of Gath had a personal kindness for him, valuing his merit, and, perhaps, the more, for his killing Goliath of Gath, who, it may be, had been no friend to Achish. To him David now went directly, as to one he could confide in, as afterwards, *chap.* xxvii. 2, 3. and Achish would now have protected him, but that he was afraid of disobliging his own people by it. God's persecuted people have often found better usage from Philistines than from Israelites, in the Gentile theatres, than in the Jewish synagogues: the king of Judah imprisoned Jeremiah, and the king of Babylon set him at liberty.

2. The disgust which the servants of Achish took at his being there, and their complaint of it to Achish, *ver.* 11. *Is not this David?* Is not this he that has triumphed over the Philistines, witness that burthen of the song which was so much talked of; *Saul has slain his thousands*, but *David*, this very man, *his ten thousands*. Nay, Is not this he that (if our intelligence from the land of Israel be true) is, or is to be, *king of the land*? As such, he must be an enemy to our country, and is it safe or honourable for us to protect or entertain such a man? Achish, perhaps, had intimated to them, that it would be policy to entertain David, because he was now an enemy to Saul, and he might be hereafter a friend to them; it is common for the outlaws of a nation, to be sheltered by the enemies of that nation; but the servants of Achish disagreed to his politicks, and thought it not at all fit that he should stay among them.

3. The fright which this put David into: though he had some reason to put a confidence in Achish, yet when he perceived the servants of Achish jealous of him, he began to be afraid that Achish would be obliged to deliver him up to them, and he was *fore afraid*, *ver.* 12. and, perhaps, he was the more apprehensive of his own danger, when he was thus discovered, because he wore Goliath's sword, which, we may suppose, was well known at Gath, and with which he had reason to expect they would cut off his head, as he had cut off Goliath's with it. David now learned by experience what he has taught us, *Psalms* cxviii. 9. *that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes*. Men of high degree are a lie, and if we make them our hope, they may prove our fear. It was at this time that David penned the fifty sixth Psalm (Michtam a golden Psalm) *when the Philistines took him in Gath*, where, having shewed before God his distress, he resolves, *ver.* 3. *what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*; and therefore, *ver.* 11. *will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, no not the sons of the giant.

4. The course he took to get out of their hands. He *feigned himself mad*, *ver.* 13. he used the gestures and fashions of a natural fool, or one that was gone out of his wits; supposing they would be ready enough to believe that the disgrace he was fallen into, and the troubles he was now in had driven him distracted. This dissimulation of his cannot be justified, it was a mean thing thus to disparage himself, and not agreeing with truth thus to misrepresent himself, and therefore not becoming the honour and sincerity of such a man.

a man as David : yet it may be excused, for it was not a downright lie, and it was like a stratagem in war, by which he imposed upon his enemies for the preservation of his own life. What David did here in pretence, and for his own safety, which made it excusable, drunkards do really, and only to gratify a base lust, they make fools of themselves and change their behaviour, their words and actions commonly are either as silly and ridiculous as an idiot's, or as furious and outrageous as a madman's, which has oft made me wonder, that ever men of sense and honour should allow themselves in it.

5. His escape by this means, *ver. 14, 15.* I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but being desirous to protect David (as we find afterwards he was very kind to him, even when the lords of the Philistines favoured him not, *chap. xxviii. 1, 2. xxix. 6.*) took on him to his servants, that he really thought he was mad, and therefore they had reason to question whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they needed not fear him, what harm could he do them now his reason was departed from him? They suspected that Achish was inclined to entertain him; not I, saith he, he is a madman, I'll have nothing to do with him, you need not fear that I should employ him, or give him any countenance. He humours the thing well enough when he asks, *Have I need of madmen? Shall this fool come into my house?* I will shew him no kindness, but then you shall do him no hurt, for if he be a madman he is to be pitied. He therefore *drove him away*, as it is in the title of *Psalms xxxiv.* which David penned upon this occasion, and an excellent Psalm it is, and shews, that he did not change his spirit when he changed his behaviour, but even in the greatest difficulties and hurries his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord; and he concludes that Psalm with this assurance, that *none of them that trust in God shall be desolate*, though they may be, as he now was, solitary and distressed, *persecuted but not forsaken.*

C H A P. XXII.

David being driven from Achish, returns into the land of Israel to be hunted by Saul. 1. David sets up his standard in the cave of Adullam, entertains his relations, ver. 1. Lifts soldiers, ver. 2. but removes his aged parents to a more quiet settlement, ver. 3, 4. and has the prophet Gad for his counsellor, ver. 5. 2. Saul resolves to pursue him and find him out, complains of his servants and Jonathan, ver. 6,—8. and finding by Doeg's information that Ahimelech had been kind to David, he ordered him and all the priests that were with him, eighty-five in all, to be put to death, and all that belonged to them destroyed, ver. 9,—19. from the barbarous execution of which sentence, Abiathar escaped to David, ver. 20, —23.

David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam : and when his brethren, and all his fathers house heard it, they went down thither to him. 2. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them : and there were with him about four hundred men. 3. ¶ And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab : and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. 4. And he brought them before the king of Moab : and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. 5. ¶ And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold, depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Har-eth.

Here, 1. David shelters himself in the cave of Adullam, *ver. 1.* Whether it was a natural or artificial fastness doth not appear ; it is probable, the access to it was so difficult that David thought himself able, with Goliath's sword, to keep it against all the forces of Saul, and therefore buried himself alive in it, while he was waiting to see (as he saith here, *ver. 3.*) what God would do with him. The promise of the kingdom, implied a promise of preservation to it, and yet David used proper means for his own safety, else he had tempted God. He did not do any thing that aimed to destroy Saul, but only to secure himself. He that might have done good service to his country, as a judge or general, is here shut up in a cave, and thrown by as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. We must not think it strange, if sometimes shining lights be thus eclipsed and hid under a bushel. Perhaps, the apostle refers to this instance of David, among others, when he speaks of some of the Old Testament worthies that *wandered in deserts, in dens and caves of the earth*, Heb. xi. 38. It was at this time that David penned the hundred forty second Psalm, which is intitled, *A prayer when he was in the cave* ; and there he complains that *no man would know him*, and that refuge failed him, but hopes that shortly the righteous should compass him about.

2. Thither his relations flocked to him, *his brethren and all his father's house*, to be protected by him, to give assistance to him,

and to take their lot with him ; *A brother is born for adversity.* Now Joab and Abishai, and the rest of his relations, came to him to suffer and venture with him, in hopes shortly to be advanced with him ; and they were so. The first three of his worthies were those, that first owned him when he was in the cave, *1 Chron. xi. 15, &c.*

3. Here he began to raise forces in his own defence, *ver. 2.* He found by the late experiments he had made, that he could not save himself by flight, and therefore was necessitated to do it by force, wherein he never acted offensively, never offered any violence to his prince, nor gave any disturbance to the peace of the kingdom, but only used his forces as a guard to his own person. But whatever defence his soldiers were to him, they did him no great credit, for the regiment he had was made up not of great men, or rich men, or stout men, no nor good men, but men *in distress, in debt, and discontented*, men of broken fortunes and restless spirits, that were put to their shifts, and knew not well what to do with themselves. When David had fixed his head-quarters in the cave of Adullam, they came and lifted themselves under him to the number of about four hundred. See what weak instruments God sometimes makes use of, by which to bring about his own purposes. The Son of David is ready to receive distressed souls, that will appoint him their captain and be commanded by him.

4. He took care to settle his parents in a place of safety ; no such place could he find in all the land of Israel, while Saul was so bitterly enraged against him, and all that belonged to him for his sake ; he therefore goes with them to the king of Moab, and puts them under his protection, *ver. 3, 4.* Observe here (1.) With what a tender concern he provided for his aged parents. It was not fit they should be exposed either to the frights or to the fatigues which he must expect during his struggle with Saul, their age would by no means bear it, therefore the first thing he doth is to find them a quiet habitation, whatever became of himself. Let children learn from hence to *shew pity at home, and to requite their parents*, *1 Tim. v. 4.* in every thing consulting their ease and satisfaction, though never so highly preferred, and never so much employed, let them not forget their aged parents. (2.) With what an humble faith he expects the issue of his present distresses, *till I know what God will do for me.* He expresseth his hopes very modestly, as one that had intirely cast himself upon God and committed his way to him, expecting a good issue, not from his own arts, or arms, or merits, but from what the wisdom, power, and goodness of God would do for him. Now David's father and mother forsook him, but God did not, *Psalms xxvii. 10.*

5. He had the advice and assistance of the prophet Gad, who, probably, was one of the sons of the prophets that were brought up under Samuel, and was by him recommended to David for his chaplain, or spiritual guide ; being a prophet he would pray for him and instruct him in the mind of God ; and David, though he was himself a prophet, was glad of his assistance. He advised him to go into the land of Judah, *ver. 5.* as one that was confident of his own innocency, and was well assured of the divine protection, and was desirous, even in his present hard circumstances, to do some service to his tribe and country. Let him not be ashamed to own his own cause, nor decline the succours that would be offered him. Animated by this word, there he determined to appear publicly. Thus are the *steps of a good man ordered by the Lord.*

6. ¶ When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah, under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him) 7. Then said Saul unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites, Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields, and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds : 8. That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me, that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?* 9. ¶ Then answered Doeg the Edomite, (which was set over the servants of Saul) and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10. And he enquired of the LORD for him : and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. 11. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest the son of Ahitub, and all his fathers house, the priests that were in Nob : and they came all of them to the king. 12. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub : and he answered, Here I am, my lord. 13. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou, and the son of Jesse ; in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait, as at this day? 14. Then Ahimelech answered

answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants, as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? 15. Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. 16. And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house. 17. ¶ And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD, because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. 18. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. 19. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

We have seen the progress of David's troubles; now here we have the progress of Saul's wickedness. He seems to have laid aside the thoughts of all other business, and to have devoted himself wholly to the pursuit of David. He heard, at length, by the common fame of the country, that David *was discovered*, i. e. that he appeared publicly, and lifted men into his service; and hereupon called all his servants about him, and sat down under a tree, or grove, in the high place at Gibeah, with his spear in his hand for a scepter, intimating the force by which he designed to rule, and the present temper of his spirit, or its distemper rather, which was to kill all that stood in his way.

In this bloody court of inquisition,

1. Saul seeks for information against David and Jonathan, *ver. 7, 8*. Two things he was willing to suspect and desirous to see proved, that he might wreak his malice upon two of the best and most excellent men he had about him. (1.) That his servant David did *lie in wait* for him and seek his life, which was utterly false. He really sought David's life, and therefore pretended that David sought his life, though he could not charge him with any overt act that gave the least umbrage or suspicion. (2.) That his son Jonathan stirred him up to do so, and was confederate with him in compassing and imagining the death of the king. This also was notoriously false. A league of friendship there was between David and Jonathan, but no conspiracy in any evil thing; none of the articles of their covenant carried any mischief to Saul. If Jonathan had agreed, after the death of Saul, to resign to David, in compliance with the revealed will of God, what harm would that do to Saul? Yet thus the best friends to their prince and country have oft been odiously represented as enemies to both; even Christ himself was so. He takes it for granted that Jonathan and David were in a plot against him, his crown and dignity, and is displeased with his servants that they do not give him information of it, supposing that they could not but know it; whereas really there was no such thing. See the nature of a jealous malice, and its arts of wheedling, to extort discoveries of things that are not. He looks upon all about him as his enemies, because they do not just say as he saith, and tells them, 1. That they were very unwise, and acted against the interest both of their tribe (for they were Benjamites, and David, if he were advanced, would bring the honour into Judah which was now in Benjamin) and of their families; for David would never be able to give them such rewards as he had for them, of *fields and vineyards*, and such preferments, to be colonels and captains. 2. That they were unfaithful; *you have conspired against me*. What a continual loss and torment are they in that give way to a spirit of jealousy! *If a ruler bearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, Prov. xxix. 12. i. e. they seem to be so in his eyes. 3. That they were very unkind. He thought to work upon their good nature with that word, *there is none of you that is so much as sorry for me*, or *sollicitous for me*, as some read it. By these reasonings he stirred them up to act vigorously, as the instruments of his malice, that they might take away his suspicions of them.

2. Though he could not learn any thing from his servants against David and Jonathan, yet he got information from Doeg against Ahimelech the priest.

1. An indictment is brought against Ahimelech by Doeg, and he himself is evidence against him, *ver. 9, 10*. Perhaps, Doeg, as bad as he was, had not given this information if Saul had not extorted it, for had he been very forward to it he would have done it sooner: but now he thinks they must all be traitors, if none of them be accusers, and therefore tells Saul what kindness Ahimelech had shewed to David, which he himself happened to be an eye-witness of. He had *enquired of God for him*, which the priest used not to do but for publick persons and about publick affairs, and that he had furnished him with *bread and a sword*. All this was true: but it

was not the whole truth; he ought to have told Saul further, that David had made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon the king's business; so that what service he did to David, however it proved, was designed in honour to Saul, and this would have cleared Ahimelech, whom Saul had in his power, and would have thrown all the blame upon David, who was out of his reach.

2. Ahimelech is seized, or summoned rather to appear before the king, and upon this indictment he is arraigned. The king sent for him and all the priests that then attended the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be aiding and abetting, and they not being conscious of any guilt, and therefore not apprehensive of any danger *came all of them to the king*, *ver. 11*. and none of them attempted to make an escape, or to flee to David for shelter, as they would have done now he had set up his standard, if they had been as much in his interests as Saul suspected they were. Saul arraigns him himself with the utmost disdain and indignation, *ver. 12*. *Hear now, thou son of Abitub*, not so much as calling him by his name, much less giving him his title of distinction. By this it appears that he had cast off the fear of God, that he shewed no respect at all to his priests, but took a pleasure in affronting them and insulting over them. Ahimelech holds up his hand at the bar in those words, *Here I am, my lord*, ready to hear my charge, knowing I have done no wrong. He doth not demur to the jurisdiction of Saul's court, nor insist upon an exemption as a priest, no, not though he were a high priest, to which office that of the judge, or chief magistrate, had not long since been annexed; but Saul having now the sovereignty vested in him, in things pertaining to the king, even the high priest sets himself on a level with common Israelites: *Let every soul be subject* (even clergy-men) *to the higher powers*.

3. His indictment is read to him, *ver. 13*. That he, as a false traitor, had joined himself with the son of Jesse in a plot, to depose and murder the king. His design (saith Saul) was to *rise up against me*, and thou didst assist him with victuals and arms. See what ill constructions the most innocent actions are liable to; how unsafe they are that live under a tyrannical government, and what reason we have to be thankful for the happy constitution and administration of the government we are under.

4. To this indictment he pleads not guilty, *ver. 14, 15*. he owns the fact, but denies that he did it traitorously or maliciously, or with any design against the king. He pleads that he was so far from knowing of any quarrel between Saul and David, that he really took David to have been then as much in favour at court as ever he had been. Observe, He doth not plead that David had told him an untruth, and with that had imposed upon him, though really it was so, because he would not proclaim the weakness of so good a man, no not for his own vindication, especially to Saul, who sought all occasions against him; but he insists upon the settled reputation David had, as the most faithful of all the servants of Saul; the honour the king had put upon him in marrying his daughter to him, and the use the king had often made of him, and the trust he had reposed in him, *he goes at thy bidding, and is honourable in thy house*, and therefore any one would think it a meritorious piece of service to the crown to shew him respect, so far from apprehending it to be a crime. He pleads, that he had been wont to *enquire of God for him*, when he was sent by Saul upon any expedition, and did it now as innocently as ever he had done it. He protests his abhorrence of the thought of being in a plot against the king, *Be it far from me*, I mind my own business, and meddle not with state matters. He begs the king's favour, *let him not impute any crime to us*; and concludes with a declaration of his innocency, *thy servant knew nothing of all this*. Could any man plead with more evidences of sincerity? Had he been tried by a jury of honest Israelites, he had certainly been acquitted, for who can find any fault in him? But,

5. Saul himself gives judgment against him, *ver. 16*. *Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech*, as a rebel, *thou, and all thy father's house*. What could be more unjust? *I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there*, Eccl. iii. 16. 1. It was unjust that Saul should himself, himself alone, give judgment in his own cause, without any appeal either to judge or prophet, to his privy council, or to a council of war. 2. That so fair a plea should be over-ruled and rejected without any reason given, or any attempt to disprove the allegations of it, but purely with a high hand. 3. That sentence should be past so hastily, and with so much precipitation, the judge taking no time himself to consider of it, nor allowing the prisoner any time to move in arrest of judgment. 4. That the sentence should be past, not only on Ahimelech himself, who was the only person accused by Doeg, but on *all his father's house*, against whom nothing was alledged: must the children be put to death for the fathers? 5. That the sentence was pronounced in passion, not for the support of justice, but for the gratification of his brutish rage.

6. He issues out a warrant (a verbal warrant only) for the immediate execution of this bloody sentence.

1. He ordered his footmen to be the executioners of this sentence, but they refused, *ver. 17*. Hereby he intended to put a further disgrace upon the priests, they may not die by the hands of his men of war, (as 1 Kings ii. 29.) or his usual ministers of justice, but his footmen must triumph over them, and wash their hands in their blood. 1. Never was the command of a prince more barbarously given.

given. *Turn and slay the priests of the Lord.* This is spoken with such an air of impiety, as can scarce be paralleled. Had he seemed to forget their sacred office, and relation to God, and take no notice of that, it had intimated some regret, that men of that character should fall under his displeasure; but to call them the priests of the Lord then, when he ordered his footmen to cut their throats, looked as if, upon that very account, he hated them. God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being revenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach. What wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to, when he gets the dominion! He alledges, in his order, that which was utterly false, and unproved to him, that they knew when David fled, whereas they knew nothing of the matter. But malice and murder are commonly supported with lies. 2. Never was the command of a prince more honourably disobeyed. The footmen had more sense and grace than their master. Though they might expect to be turned out of their places, if not punished, and put to death, for their refusal, yet, come on them what would, they would not offer to fall upon the priests of the Lord, such a reverence had they for their office, and such a conviction of their innocency.

2. He ordered Doeg (the accuser) to be the executioner, and he did it. One would have thought, that the footmen's refusal should have awakened Saul's conscience, and he should not have insisted upon the doing of a thing so barbarous, as that his footmen startled at the thought of it. But his mind was blinded, and his heart hardened, and if they will not do it, the hands of the witness shall be upon them, *Deut. xvii. 7.* The most bloody tyrants have found out instruments of their cruelty, as barbarous as themselves; Doeg is no sooner commanded to fall upon the priests, but he doth it willingly enough, and, meeting with no resistance, slays with his own hand (for ought appears) on that same day, eighty-five priests, that were of the age of ministration, between twenty and fifty, for they *wore a linen ephod*, ver. 18. and, perhaps, appeared at this time before Saul in their habits, and were slain in them. This (one would think) were enough to satiate the most blood-thirsty, but the horseleech of persecution still cries, give, give. Doeg, by Saul's order, no doubt, having murdered the priests, went to their city, Nob, and put all to the sword there, ver. 19. *men, women, and children*, and the cattle too. Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror! Strange, that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman! We may see in this, 1. The desperate wickedness of Saul, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him. Nothing so vile, but they may be hurried to it, who have provoked God to give them up to their hearts lusts. He that was so compassionate as to spare Agag, and the cattle of the Amalekites, in disobedience to the command of God, could now, with unrelenting bowels, see the priests of the Lord murdered, and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. For that sin God left him to these. 2. The accomplishment of the threatnings long since pronounced against the house of Eli, for Ahimelech and his family were descendents from him. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it: now God performed against Eli that, at which the ears of them that heard it must needs tingle, as he had told him, that he would *judge his house for ever*, chap. iii. 11, 12, 13. No word of God shall fall to the ground. 3. This may be considered as a great judgment upon Israel, and the just punishment of their desiring a king, before the time God intended them one. How deplorable was the state of religion at this time in Israel! Though the ark had long been in obscurity, yet it was some comfort to them that they had the altar, and priests to serve at it; but now to see their priests weltring in their own blood, and the heirs of the priesthood too, and the city of the priests made a desolation; so that the altar of God must needs be neglected for want of attendants, and this by the unjust and cruel order of their own king, to satisfy his brutish rage, this could not but go to the heart of all pious Israelites, and make them wish a thousand times, they had been satisfied in the government of Samuel, and his sons. The worst enemies of their nation could not have done them a greater mischief.

20. ¶ And one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21. And Abiathar shewed David, that Saul had slain the LORD's priests. 22. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy fathers house. 23. Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

Here is, 1. The escape of Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, out of the desolations of the priests city. Probably, when his father went to appear upon Saul's summons, he was left at home to attend the altar, by which means he escaped the first execution, and before Doeg and his bloodhounds came to Nob he had intelligence of the danger, and had time to shift for his own safety. And whither should he go but to David, ver. 20. They that suffer for the son

of David, let them commit the keeping of their souls to him, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. David's resentment of the melancholy tidings he brought. He gave David an account of the bloody work Saul had made among the priests of the Lord, ver. 21. as the disciples of John, when their master was beheaded, *went and told Jesus*; Matt. xiv. 12. And David greatly lamented the calamity it self, but especially his own being accessary to it, *I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house*, ver. 22. Note, It is a great trouble to a good man, to find himself any way an occasion of the calamities of the church and ministry. David knew Doeg's character so well, that he feared he would do some such mischief as this, when he saw him at the sanctuary. *I knew he would tell Saul*. He calls him Doeg the Edomite, because he retained the heart of an Edomite, though, by embracing the profession of the Jewish religion, he had put on the mask of an Israelite.

3. The protection he granted to Abiathar. He saw him in a mighty fright, as he had reason to be, and therefore bids him not fear, he would be as careful for him, as for himself, *with me thou shalt be in safeguard*, ver. 33. David having now time to recollect himself, speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promiseth, that whatsoever was his protection, Abiathar should have the benefit of. It is promised to the son of David, that God will *hide him in the shadow of his hand*, Isa. xlix. 2. and with him, all that are his, may be sure, that *they shall be in safeguard*, Psalm xci. 1. David had now, not only a prophet, but a priest, a high priest with him, to whom he was a blessing, and they to him, and both a happy omen of his success. Yet it appears, by chap. xxviii. 6. that Saul had a high priest too, for he had a Urim to consult; it is supposed, he preferred Ahitub the father of Zadok of the family of Eleazar, 1 Chron. vi. 8. For even those that hate the power of godliness, yet will not be without the form. It must not be forgotten here, that David at this time penned the fifty second Psalm, as appears by the title of that Psalm, wherein he represents Doeg, not only as malicious and spiteful, but as false and deceitful, because, though what he said, was, for the substance of it, true, yet he put false colours upon it with a design to do mischief: yet, even then, when the priesthood was become as a withered branch, he looks upon himself as a *green olive-tree in the house of God*, ver. 8. In this mighty hurry and distraction that David was continually in, yet he found both time and a heart for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

C H A P. XXIII.

Saul having made himself drunk with the blood of the priests of the Lord, is here, in this chapter, seeking David's life, who appears here doing good, and suffering ill at the same time. Here is, 1. The good service he did to his king and country, in rescuing the city of Keilah out of the hands of the Philistines, ver. 1,—6. 2. The danger he was thereby brought into from the malice of the prince he served, and the treachery of the city he saved; and his deliverance, by divine direction, from that danger, ver. 7,—13. 3. David in a wood, and his friend Jonathan visiting him there, and encouraging him, ver. 14,—18. 4. The information which the Ziphites brought to Saul of David's haunts, and the expedition Saul made in pursuit of him, ver. 19,—25. 5. The narrow escape David had of falling into his hands, ver. 26,—29. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.

1. **T**hen they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing-floors. 2. Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. 3. And Davids men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? 4. Then David enquired of the LORD yet again: and the LORD answered him, and said, Arise, go down to Keilah: for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 5. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter: so David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6. And it came to pass when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

Now we find, why the prophet Gad (by divine direction, no doubt) ordered David to go into the land of Judah, chap. xxii. 5. that, now Saul neglected the publick safety, he might take care of it, notwithstanding the ill treatment that was given him, for he must render good for evil, and therein be a type of him, who not only ventured his life, but laid down his life, for them that were his enemies.

1. Tidings are brought to David, as to the patron and protector of his countries liberties, that the Philistines had made a descent upon the city of Keilah, and plunder'd the country thereabouts, *ver. 1.* Probably, 'twas the departure both of God and David from Saul, that encouraged the Philistines to make this incursion. When princes begin to persecute God's people and ministers, let them expect no other but vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet, is to let God's church be quiet in it: but if Saul fight against David, the Philistines shall fight against his country.

2. David is forward enough to come in for their relief, but is willing to enquire of the Lord concerning it. Here is an instance, (1.) Of David's generosity and publick-spiritedness. Tho' his head and hands were full of his own business, and he had enough to do with that little force he had to secure himself, yet he was concerned for the safety of his country, and could not sit still to see that ravaged: nay, though Saul, whose business it was to guard the borders of his land, hated him and sought his life, yet he was willing to the utmost of his power to serve him and his interests against the common enemy, and bravely abhorred the thought of sacrificing the common welfare to his private revenge. Those are unlike to David who fully decline to do good, because they have not been so well considered as they deserved, for the services they have done. (2.) Of David's piety and regard to God. He enquired of the Lord by the prophet Gad, for it should seem by *ver. 6.* that Abiathar came not to him with the ephod, till he was in Keilah. His enquiry is, *Shall I go and smite these Philistines?* He enquires both concerning the duty, whether he might lawfully take Saul's work out of his hand, and act without a commission from him; and concerning the event, whether he might safely venture against such a force as the Philistines had, with such a handful of men at his feet, and such a dangerous enemy as Saul was at his back. It is our duty, and will be our ease and comfort, whatever happens, to acknowledge God in all our ways, and to seek direction from him.

3. God appointed him once, and again, to go against the Philistines, and promised him success. *Go, and smite the Philistines,* *ver. 2.* His men opposed it, *ver. 3.* no sooner did he begin to have soldiers of his own, but he found it hard enough to manage them. They objected, that they had enemies enow among their own countrymen, they needed not make the Philistines their enemies. Their hearts failed them, when they only apprehended themselves in danger from Saul's pursuivants, much more when they came to engage the Philistine armies. To satisfy them therefore, he *enquired of the Lord again,* and now received not only a full commission, which would warrant him to fight, though he had no orders from Saul, *Arise, go down to Keilah,* but a full assurance of victory, *I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand,* *ver. 4.* This was enough to animate the greatest coward he had in his regiment.

4. He went accordingly against the Philistines, routed them, and rescued Keilah, *ver. 5.* And it should seem, he made a sally into the country of the Philistines, for he carried off their cattle by way of reprisal, for the wrong they did to the men of Keilah, in robbing their threshing floors. Here notice is taken, *ver. 6.* that it was while David remained in Keilah, after he had cleared it of the Philistines, that Abiathar came to him with the Ephod in his hand, *i. e.* The high-priests Ephod, in which the Urim and Thummim was. It was a great comfort to David in his banishment, that when he could not go to the house of God, he had some of the choicest treasures of that house brought to him, the high-priest, and his breast plate of judgment.

7. ¶ And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah: and Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. 8. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9. ¶ And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, bring hither the ephod. 10. Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. 11. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down. 12. Then said David, will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? and the LORD said, they will deliver thee up. 13. ¶ Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go: and it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah: and he forbore to go forth.

Here is 1. Saul contriving within himself the destruction of David, *ver. 7, 8.* He heard that he was come to Keilah; and did he not hear what brought him thither? Was it not told him, that he had bravely relieved Keilah, and delivered it out of the hands of the Philistines? Which one would think should have put Saul upon

considering, what honour and dignity should be done to David for this? But instead of that, he catches at it as an opportunity of doing him a mischief. An ungrateful wretch he was, and for ever unworthy to have any service or kindness done him. Well might David complain of his enemies, that they rewarded him *evil for good*, and that for his love they were his adversaries, *Psal. xxxv. 12. cix 4.* Christ was used thus basely, *John x. 32.* Now observe, 1. How Saul abused the God of Israel, in making his providence to patronize and give countenance to his malicious designs, and from thence promising himself success in them. God hath delivered him into my hand, as if he, who was rejected of God, were in this instance owned and favoured by him, and David infatuated. He vainly triumphs before the victory, forgetting how oft he had had fairer advantages against David than he had now, and yet missed his aim: He impiously entitles God to his cause, because he thought he had gained one point. Therefore David prays (*Psal. cxl. 8.*) *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked Device, lest they exalt themselves.* We must not think one smiling providence, either justifies an unrighteous cause, or secures its success. 2. How Saul abused the Israel of God, in making them the servants of his malice against David. He called all the people together to war, and they must with all speed march to Keilah, pretending to oppose the Philistines, but intending to besiege David and his men; concealing that design, for it is said, *ver. 4.* he *secretly practised mischief against him.* Miserable is that people whose prince is a tyrant, for while some are sufferers by his tyranny, others (which is worse) are made servants to it, and instruments of it.

2. David consulting with God concerning his own preservation. He knew, by the informations brought him, that Saul was plotting his ruin, *ver. 9.* and therefore applies himself to his great protector for direction. No sooner is the ephod brought him, but he makes use of it, *bring hither the ephod.* We have the Scriptures, those lively oracles in our hands, let us take advice from them in doubtful cases, bring hither the bible. David's address to God upon this occasion is, 1. Very solemn and reverent. Twice he calls God, the Lord God of Israel, and thrice calls himself his servant, *ver. 10, 11.* Those that address to God must know their distance, and who they are speaking to. 2. Very particular and express. His representation of the case is so, *ver. 10.* Thy servant has certainly heard by very good hands (for he would not call for the ephod upon every idle rumour) that Saul has a design upon Keilah, he doth not say, to destroy me, but to destroy the city (as he had lately done the city of Nob) for my sake. He seems more solicitous for their safety than for his own, and will expose himself any where, rather than they shall be brought into trouble by his being among them. Generous souls are thus minded. His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him; Lord direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss. He doth indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into method. That question should have been put first, and was first answered, will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard? Yea, saith the oracle, he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town. Well, but if he do come down, will the men of Keilah stand by me, in holding the city against him, or will they open him the gates, and deliver me into his hand. If he had asked the men (*i. e.* the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves, what they would do in that case, they could not have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the trial, much less which way the major vote of their council would carry it; or, they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterwards have betrayed him, but God could tell him infallibly: When Saul besieged their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond soever they now seem of thee, as their Saviour, they will deliver thee up, rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury. Note, 1. God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their length, their strength, what is in them, and what they will do, if they come into such and such circumstances. 2. He therefore knows not only what will be, but what would be, if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

David having thus far notice given him of his danger, quitted Keilah, *ver. 13.* His followers were now increased in number to six hundred, with these he went out, not knowing whither he went, but resolving to follow providence, and put himself under its protection. This broke Saul's measures, he thought God had delivered him into his hand; but it proved that God delivered him out of his hand, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. When Saul heard that David was escaped from Keilah, he forbore to go forth with the body of the army as he intended, *ver. 8.* and resolved to take only his own guards, and go in quest of him. Thus doth God baffle the designs of his peoples enemies, and turn their counsels head-long.

14. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph: and Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. 15. And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness

ness of Ziph in a wood. 16. And Jonathan Sauls son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. 17. And he said unto him, fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee, and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. 18. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Here is, 1. David absconding. He abode in a *wilderness, in a mountain*, ver. 14. *in a wood*, ver. 15. We must here, 1. Commend his eminent virtues, his humility, modesty, fidelity to his prince, and patient attendance on the providence of his God, that he did not draw up his forces against Saul, fight him in the field, or surprize him by some stratagem or other, and so avenge his own quarrel and that of the Lord's priests upon him, and put an end to his own troubles, and the calamities of the country under his tyrannical government: No, he makes no such attempt; keeps God's way, waits God's time, and is content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses, though, with some, it might seem a reproach to that courage for which he had been famous. But, 2. We must also lament his hard fate, that an innocent man should be thus terrified, and put in fear of his life; that a man of honour should be thus disgraced, a man of merit thus recompenced for his services, and a man that delighted in the service both of God and his country should be debarred from both, and wrapt up in obscurity. What shall we say to this? Let it make us think the worse of this world, which oft gives such bad treatment to its best men: let it reconcile even great and active men to privacy and restraint, if providence make that their lot, for it was David's: and let it make us long for that kingdom, where goodness shall for ever be in glory, and holiness in honour, and the righteous shall shine as the sun, which cannot be put under a bushel.

2. Saul hunting him as his implacable enemy. He fought him every day, so restless was his malice, ver. 14. He fought his life no less, so cruel was his malice, ver. 15. As it had been from the beginning, it was now, and will be, *He that is born after the flesh, persecuteth him that is born after the spirit*, Gal. iv. 29.

3. God defending him, as his powerful protector. God delivered him not into his hand, as Saul hoped, ver. 7. and unless God had delivered him into his hand, he could not prevail against him, *John xix. 11.*

4. Jonathan comforting him, as his faithful and constant friend. True lovers will find out means to get together; David, it is likely, appointed time and place for this interview, and Jonathan observed it, though he exposed himself by it to his father's displeasure, and, had it been discovered, might have cost him his life. True friendship will not stick at danger, but can easily venture; will not stick at condescension, but can easily stoop; and exchange a palace for a wood to serve a friend. The very sight of Jonathan was reviving to David; but besides that, he said that to him which was very encouraging.

1. As a pious friend he directed him to God the foundation of his confidence, and the fountain of his comfort. He strengthened his hand in God. David, though a strong believer, needed the help of his friends for the perfecting of what was lacking in his faith; and herein Jonathan was helpful to him, by minding him of the promise of God, the holy oil wherewith he was anointed, the presence of God with him hitherto, and the many experiences he had had of God's goodness to him. Thus he strengthened his hands for action, by encouraging his heart not in the creature, but in God. Jonathan was not in a capacity of doing any thing to strengthen him, but he assured him God would.

2. As a self-denying friend, he takes a pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to that honour, which was his birthright, ver. 17. Thou shalt live to be king, and I shall think it preferment enough to be next thee, near thee, though under thee, and will never pretend to be a rival with thee. This resignation which Jonathan made to David of his title, would be a great satisfaction to him, and make his way much the more clear. This he tells him, Saul knew very well, Jonathan having sometimes heard him say as much: Whence it appears, what a wicked man Saul was to persecute one whom God favoured; and what a foolish man he was, in thinking to prevent that which God had determined, and which would certainly come to pass. How could he disannul what God had purposed?

3. As a constant friend, he renewed his league of friendship with him; they two made a covenant now, this third time, before the Lord, calling him to witness to it, ver. 18. True love takes delight in repeating its engagements, giving and receiving fresh assurances of the firmness of the friendship. Our covenant with God should be oft renewed, and therein our communion with him kept up. David and Jonathan now parted, and never came together again that we find, in this world; for Jonathan said what he wished, not what he had ground to expect, when he promised himself, that he should be next David in his kingdom.

19. ¶ Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, doth not David hide himself with us in strong

holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? 20. Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand. 21. And Saul said, blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me. 22. Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me, that he dealeth very subtilly. 23. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me, with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah. 24. And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25. Saul also and his men went to seek him; and they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon: and when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. 26. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. 27. ¶ But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. 28. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-Hammahlekoth. 29. ¶ And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

Here, 1. The Ziphites offer their service to Saul, to betray David to him, ver. 19, 20. He was sheltering himself in the wilderness of Ziph, ver. 14, 15. putting the more confidence in the people of that country, because they were of his own tribe: And they had reason to think themselves happy, that they had an opportunity of serving one that was the ornament of their tribe, and was likely to be much more so; that was so far from plundering the country, or giving it any disturbance with his troops, that he was ready to protect it, and do them all the good offices that there was occasion for: But to ingratiate themselves with Saul they went to him, and not only informed him very particularly where David quartered, ver. 19. but invited him to come with his forces into their country in pursuit of him, and promised to deliver him into his hand, ver. 20. Saul had not sent to examine, or threaten them, but of their own accord, and even without asking a reward (as Judas did, *what will ye give me?*) they profer to betray David to him, that they knew thirsted after his blood.

2. Saul thankfully receives their information, and gladly lays hold on the opportunity of hunting David in their wilderness, in hopes to make a prey of him at length. He intimates to them how kindly he took it, ver. 21. *Blessed be ye of the Lord* (so near is God to his mouth, though far from his reins) *for ye have compassion on me.* It seems he looked upon himself as a miserable man and an object of pity, his own envy and ill nature made him so, else he might have been easy, and have needed no man's compassion. He likewise insinuates the little concern that the generality of his people shewed for him: You have compassion on me, which others have not. Saul gives them instructions to search more particularly for his haunts, ver. 22. for (saith he) I hear he deals very subtilly, representing him as a man crafty to do mischief, whereas all his subtilty was to secure himself. It was strange, he did not go down with them immediately, but he hoped, by their means, to set his game with the more certainty, and thus divine providence gave David time to shift for himself. But the Ziphites had laid their spies upon all the places, where he was likely to be discovered; and therefore Saul might come and catch him, if he were in the land, ver. 23. Now he thought himself sure of his prey, and pleased with thoughts of devouring it.

3. The imminent peril that David was now brought into. Upon intelligence that the Ziphites had betrayed him, he retired from the hill of Hachilah to the wilderness of Maon, ver. 24. and at this time he penned the fifty-fourth Psalm, as appears by the title, wherein he calls the Ziphites strangers, though they were Israelites, because they used him barbarously; but puts himself under the divine protection, *behold, God is my helper*, and then all shall be well. Saul, having got the scent of him, pursued him closely, ver. 25. till he came so near him that there was but a mountain between them, ver. 26. David and his men on one side of the mountain flying, and Saul and his men on the other side pursuing; David in fear, and Saul in hope; but this mountain was an emblem of the divine providence coming between David and the destroyer, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians; David was concealed by this mountain, and Saul confounded by it: David now flees as a bird to his mountain, Psalm xi. 1. and finds God to him

him as the shadow of a great rock. Saul hoped, with his numerous forces, to enclose David, and compass him in, and his men; but the ground did not prove convenient for his design, and so it failed. A new name was given to the place in remembrance of this, *ver.* 28. Sela hammahlekoth, the rock of division, because it divided between Saul and David.

4. The deliverance of David out of this danger. Providence gave Saul a diversion, when he was just ready to lay hold on David; notice was brought him that the Philistines were *invading the land*, *ver.* 27. probably, that part of the land where his own estate lay, which would be seized, or at least spoiled, by the invaders: for the little notice he took of Keilah's distress, and David's relief of it, in the beginning of this chapter, gives us cause to suspect, that he would not now have left pursuing David, and gone to oppose the Philistines, if some private interests of his own had not lain at stake. However it was, he found himself under a necessity of *going against the Philistines*, *ver.* 28. and by this means David was delivered, when he was at the brink of destruction; Saul was disappointed of his prey, and God was glorified, as his wonderful protector. When the Philistines invaded the land, they were far from intending any kindness to David by it, yet the over-ruling providence of God, which orders all events, and the times of them, made it very serviceable to him. The wisdom of God is never at a loss for ways and means to preserve his people. As this Saul here was diverted, so another Saul was converted, just then, when he was *breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the saints of the Lord*, Acts ix. 1.

Lastly, David being thus escaped, took shelter in some natural fortresses, which he found in the wilderness of Engedi, *ver.* 29. And this Dr. Lightfoot thinks was the wilderness of Judah, in which David was when he penned the sixty-third Psalm, which breathes as much of pious and devout affection as almost any of his psalms; for in all places, and in all conditions, he still kept up his communion with God.

C H A P. XXIV.

We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David, and to his shame he could never find it. In this chapter David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul, and to his honour he did not make use of it; and his sparing Saul's life was as great an instance of God's grace in him, as the preserving of his own life was of God's providence over him. Observe, 1. How maliciously Saul sought David's life, ver. 1, 2. 2. How generously David saved Saul's life, when he had him at advantage, and only cut off the skirt of his robe, ver. 3.—8. 3. How pathetically he reasoned with Saul, upon this, to bring him to a better temper towards him, ver. 9.—15. 4. The good impression this made upon Saul for the present, ver. 16.—22.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. 2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3. And he came to the sheep-cotes by the way, where was a cave, and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him, as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 7. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul: but Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8. David also rose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

Here, 1. Saul renews his pursuit of David, *ver.* 1, 2. No sooner is he come home safe from chasing the Philistines, in which, it should seem, he had good success, but he enquires after David to do him a mischief, and resolves to have another push at him, *as if he had been delivered to do all these abominations*, Jer. vii. 10. By the frequent incursions of the Philistines, he might have seen how necessary it was to recall David from his banishment, and restore him to his place in the army again; but so far is he from that, that now, more than ever, he is determined against him: and, hearing that

he is in the wilderness of Engedi, he draws out three thousand choice men, and goes with them at his feet in pursuit of him, *upon the rocks of the wild goats*, where one would think David should not be envied an habitation, nor Saul be desirous to disturb him; for what harm could he fear from one that was no better accommodated? But it is not enough to Saul that he is thus cooped up, he cannot be easy while he is alive.

2. Providence brings Saul alone into the same cave wherein David and his men had hid themselves, *ver.* 3. In those countries there were very large caves, in the sides of the rocks or mountains, partly natural, but, probably, much enlarged by art, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun; hence we read of places where the flocks did rest at noon, *Cant.* i. 7. and this cave seems to be spoken of as one of the sheep-cotes. In the sides of this cave David and his men remained, perhaps, not all his men, the whole six hundred, but only some few of his particular friends, the rest being disposed of in other the like retirements. Saul passing by turned in himself alone, not in search of David, (for, supposing him to be an aspiring ambitious man, he thought to find him rather climbing with the wild goats upon the rocks, than retiring with the sheep into a cave) but thither he turned aside to *cover his feet*, i. e. to sleep a while, it being a cool and quiet place, and very refreshing in the heat of the day: probably, he ordered his attendants to march before, reserving only a very few to wait for him at the mouth of the cave. Some, by the *covering of the feet*, understand the easing of nature, and think that was Saul's errand into the cave; but the former is more probable.

3. David's servants stir him up to kill Saul now he had so fair an opportunity to do it, *ver.* 4. they mind him that this was the day which he had long looked for, and of which God had spoken to him in general when he was anointed to the kingdom, which should put a period to his troubles, and open the passage to his advancement: Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he should find with Saul, and therefore what little reason he had to shew mercy to him: by all means (say his servants) give him the fatal blow now. See how apt we are to misunderstand, 1. The promises of God. God had assured David he would deliver him from Saul, and his men interpret that as a warrant to destroy Saul. 2. The providences of God; because it was now in his power to kill him, they concluded he might lawfully do it.

4. David cut off the skirt of his robe, but soon repented that he had done that: *his heart smote him* for it, *ver.* 5. though it did Saul no real hurt, and served David for a proof that it was in his power to have killed him, *ver.* 11. yet, because it was an affront to Saul's royal dignity, he wished he had not done it. Note, It is a good thing to have a heart within us, finiting us for sins that seem little; it is a sign conscience is awake and tender, and will be a means to prevent greater sins.

5. He reasons strongly, both with himself, and with his servants, against doing Saul any hurt. 1. He reasons with himself, *ver.* 6. *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing.* Note, Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and to resist the temptations to, not only with resolution, but with a holy indignation. He considers Saul now, not as his enemy, and the only person that stood in the way of his preferment, for then he would be induced to hearken to the temptation, but, as God's anointed, i. e. the person whom God had appointed to reign as long as he lived, and who, as such, was under the particular protection of the divine law; and, as his master, to whom he was obliged to be faithful. Let servants and subjects learn hence to be dutiful and loyal, whatever hardships are put upon them, 1 *Pet.* ii. 18. 2. He reasons with his servants. *He suffered them not to rise against Saul*, *ver.* 7. He would not only not do this ill thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus did he render good for evil to him, from whom he had received evil for good, and was herein both a type of Christ, who saved his persecutors, and an example to all christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

6. He follows Saul out of the cave, and though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him, that he was not such a man as he took him for. 1. Even in shewing his head, now he testified that he had an honourable opinion of Saul. He had too much reason to believe, that, let him say what he would, Saul would immediately be the death of him, as soon as he saw him, and yet he bravely lays aside that jealousy, and thinks Saul so much a man of sense as to hear his reasoning, when he had so much to say in his own vindication, and such fresh and sensible proofs to give of his own integrity. 2. His behaviour, as very respectful, he *stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself*, giving honour to whom honour was due, and teaching us to order our selves lowly and reverently to all our betters, even to those that have been most injurious to us.

9. **A**ND David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou mens words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen, how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave, and *some bade me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee, and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against*

gainst my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed. 11. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in mine hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not; know thou and see, that *there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee*; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

We have here David's warm and pathetic speech to Saul, wherein he endeavours to convince him, that he did him a great deal of wrong in persecuting him thus, and to persuade him therefore to be reconciled.

1. He calls him father, *ver. 11.* for he was not only, as king, the father of his country, but he was in particular his father in law. From a father one may expect compassion, and a favourable opinion. For a prince to seek the ruin of any of his good subjects, is as unnatural as for a father to seek the ruin of his own children.

2. He lays the blame of his rage against him upon his evil counsellors; *Wherefore bearest thou mens words?* *ver. 9.* It is a piece of respect owing to crowned heads, if they do amiss, to charge it upon those about them, who either advised them to it, or should have advised them against it. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him purely from his own envy and malice, yet he decently supposeth that others put him on to do it, and made him believe, that David was his enemy, and sought his hurt. Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, has his agents in all places, and, particularly, in the courts of those princes that encourage them, and give ear to them, who make it their business to represent the people of God as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces, that being thus dressed up in bear-skins, they may be baited.

3. He solemnly protests his own innocency, and that he was far from designing any hurt or mischief to Saul. *There is neither evil nor transgression in my hand,* *ver. 11.* I am not chargeable with any crime, nor conscious of any guilt, and, had I a window in my breast, thou mightest through it see the sincerity of my heart, in this protestation. *I have not sinned against thee* (however I have sinned against God) *yet thou huntest my soul*, i. e. my life. Perhaps, it was about this time that David penned the seventh Psalm, concerning the business of Cush the Benjamite, i. e. Saul, as some think, wherein he appeals to God, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* *If there be iniquity in my hands, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it*, and puts in a parenthesis with reference to the story of this chapter, *yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.*

4. He produceth undeniable evidence to prove the falseness of the suggestion, upon which Saul's malice against him was grounded; David was charged with seeking Saul's hurt; *see, (saith he) yea, see the skirt of thy robe,* *ver. 11.* let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptionable witness it is; had that been true which I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and not the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this. To corroborate this evidence he shews him, 1. That God's providence had given him opportunity to do it. *The Lord delivered thee*, very surprisingly, *to day into mine hand*, whence many a one would have gathered an intimation, that it was the will of God he should now give the determining blow to him, whose neck lay so fair for it. When Saul had but a very small advantage against David, he cried out, *God has delivered him into my hand*, chap. xxiii. 7. and resolved to make the best of that advantage; but David did not so. 2. That his counsellors, and those about him, had earnestly put him on to do it. *Some bade me kill thee.* He had blamed Saul for hearkning to mens words, and justly, for (saith he) if I had done so, thou hadst not been alive now. 3. That it was upon a good principle that he refused to do it; not because his attendants were at hand, who, it may be, would have revenged his death, no, it was not by the fear of them, but by the fear of God, that he was restrained from it; he is my lord, and the Lord's anointed, whom I ought to protect, and to whom I owe faith and allegiance, and therefore I said I will not touch a hair of his head. Such a happy command he had of himself, that his nature, in the midst of the greatest provocation, was not suffered to rebel against his principles.

5. He declares it his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. *The Lord avenge me of thee*, i. e. deliver me out of thy hand, but, whatever comes of it, *my hand shall not be upon thee*, *ver. 13.* and again, *ver. 14.* for the proverb of the ancients saith, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*; the wisdom of the ancients is transmitted to posterity by their proverbial sayings; many such we receive by tradition from our fathers, and the counsels of common persons are very much directed by this, As the old saying is. Here is one

that was in use in David's time, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, i. e. 1. Mens own iniquity will ruin them at last. So some understand it. Froward furious men will cut their own throats with their own knives. Give them rope enough, and they will hang themselves. In this sense it comes in very fitly as a reason why *his hand should not be upon him*. 2. Ill men will do ill things; according as mens principles and dispositions are, accordingly will their actions be; and this also suits very well here. If David had been a wicked man as he was represented, he would have done this wicked thing, but he durst not, because of the fear of God. Or thus: whatever injuries ill men do us (which we are not to wonder at, he that lies among thorns must expect to be scratched) yet we must not return them; never render railing for railing: though *wickedness proceed from the wicked*, yet let it not therefore proceed from us by way of retaliation. Though the dog bark at the sheep, the sheep doth not bark at the dog. See *Isa. xxxii. 6, 7, 8.*

6. He endeavours to convince him that as it was an ill thing, so it was a mean thing, for him to give chase to such an inconsiderable person as David was, *ver. 14.* *Whom doth the king of Israel pursue?* with all this care and force, *a dead dog; a flea; one flea*, so it is in the Hebrew. It is below so great a king, to enter the lists with one that is so unequal a match for him, one of his own servants, bred a poor shepherd, now an exile; neither able nor willing to make any resistance. To conquer him would not be his honour, to attempt it was his disparagement: if Saul would consult his own reputation, he would slight such an enemy, (supposing he were really his enemy) and would think himself in no danger from him. David was so far from aspiring, that he was, in his own account, as a dead dog; Mephibosheth thus calls himself, *2 Sam. ix. 8.* his humble carriage might work upon Saul, if he had any spark of generosity in him; *Satis est prostrasse leoni.* What credit would it be to Saul to trample upon a dead dog? What pleasure could it be to him to hurt a flea, a single flea, which (as some have observed) if it be fought is not easily found, if it be found, not easily caught, and, if it be caught, is a poor prize? especially for a prince. *Aquila non captat muscas.* David thinks Saul had no more reason to fear him, than to fear a flea-bite.

7. He once and again appeals to God, as the righteous judge, *ver. 12.* and *ver. 15.* *The Lord judge between me and thee.* Note, The justice of God is the refuge and comfort of oppressed innocency. If men wrong us, God will right us, at furthest, in the judgment of the great day. With him David leaves his cause, and rests satisfied, waiting his time to appear for him.

16. ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* and Saul lift up his voice and wept. 17. And he said to David, *Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.* 18. And thou hast shewed this day, how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good, for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20. And now behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my fathers house. 22. And David sware unto Saul; and Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Here is, 1. Saul's penitent reply to David's speech. It was strange he had patience to hear him out, considering how outrageous he was against him, and how cutting David's discourse was: but God restrained him and his men; and we may suppose Saul struck with amazement at the oddness of the accident, and much more when he found how much he had lain at David's mercy. His heart must have been harder than a stone if this had not affected him.

1. He melted into tears, and we will not suppose them to be counterfeit, but real expressions of his present concern, at the sight of his own iniquity, so plainly proved upon him. He speaks as one quite overcome with David's kindness; *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And as one that relented at the thought of his own folly and ingratitude, he *lift up his voice and wept*, *ver. 16.* Many mourn for their own sins, that do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for them, and yet continue in love and league with them.

2. He ingenuously acknowledged David's integrity, and his own iniquity, *ver. 17.* *Thou art more righteous than I.* Now God made good to David that word, on which he had caused him to hope, that he would *bring forth his righteousness as the light*, Psalm xxxvii. 6. They who take care to keep a good conscience, may leave

leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. This fair confession was enough to prove David innocent, even his enemy himself being judge, but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, *Thou art righteous, and I am wicked*; but the utmost he will own is this, *Thou art more righteous than I*. Bad men will commonly go no further than this, in their confessions; they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are that are better than they, and more righteous. He now owns himself under a mistake concerning David, *ver. 18. Thou hast shewed this day, that thou art so far from seeking my hurt, that thou hast dealt well with me*. We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than really they are, and than, perhaps, they are proved to be; and, when afterwards our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recal our suspicions, as Saul doth here.

3. He prays God to recompense David for this his generous kindness to him. He owns that David's sparing him when he had him in his power, was an uncommon unparalleled instance of tenderness to an enemy; no man would have done the like; and therefore, either because he thought himself not able to give him a full recompence for so great a favour, or because he found himself not inclined to give him any recompence at all, he turns him over to God for his pay; *The Lord reward thee good, ver. 19*. Poor beggars can no less than pray for their benefactors, and Saul did no more.

4. He prophesies his advancement to the throne, *ver. 20. I know well that thou shalt surely be king*. He knew it before, by the promise Samuel had made him of it, compared with the excellent spirit that appeared in David, which highly aggravated his sin and folly, in persecuting him as he did; he had as much reason to say, concerning David, as David concerning him, *How can I put forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed?* But now he knew it, by the interest he found he had in the people, the special providence of God in protecting him, and that generous kingly spirit he had now given a proof of, in sparing his enemy. Now he knew it, *i. e.* now he was in a good mood, he was willing to own that he knew it, and to submit to the conviction of it. Note, Sooner or later God will force, even those that are of the synagogue of Satan, to know and own those that he has loved, and to worship before their feet; for so it is promised, *Rev. iii. 9*. This acknowledgment which Saul made of David's uncontested title to the crown, was a great encouragement to David himself, and a support to his faith and hope.

5. He binds David with an oath, hereafter to shew the same tenderness of his seed, and of his name, that he had now shewed of his person, *ver. 21*. David had more reason to oblige Saul by an oath that he would not destroy him, yet he insists not on that, if the laws of justice and honour would not bind him, an oath would not: but Saul knew David to be a conscientious man, and would think his interests safe, if he could get them secured by his oath. Saul, by his disobedience, had ruined his own soul, and never took care, by repentance, to prevent that ruin, and yet is very solicitous that his name might not be destroyed, nor his seed cut off. However, *David swore unto him, ver. 22*. Though he might be tempted, not only in revenge, but in prudence, to extirpate Saul's family, yet he binds himself not to do it, knowing that God could and would establish the kingdom to him and his, without the use of such bloody methods. This oath he afterwards religiously observed, supported Mephibosheth, and executed those as traitors that slew Ishbosheth. The hanging up of seven of Saul's posterity, to atone for the destruction of the Gibeonites, was God's appointment, not David's act, and therefore not the violation of this oath.

2. Their parting in peace. 1. Saul for the present let fall the prosecution; he went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy to David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that, when at last he had found David, he could not at that time find in his heart to destroy him as he had designed. God has many ways to tie the hands of persecutors, when he doth not turn their hearts. 2. David continued to shift for his own safety: he knew Saul too well to trust him, and therefore *got him up into the hold*. It is dangerous venturing upon the mercy of a reconciled enemy. We read of those who believed in Christ, and yet he did not commit himself to them, *because he knew all men*. They that, like David, are innocent as doves, must thus, like him, be *wife as serpents*.

C H A P. XXV.

We have here some intermission of David's troubles by Saul, providence favoured him with a breathing time, and yet this chapter gives us instances of the troubles of David; if one vexation seem to be over, we must not be secure; a storm may arise from some other point, as here to David. 1. Tidings of the death of Samuel could not but trouble him, *ver. 1*. But, 2. The abuse he received from Nabal is more largely recorded in this chapter. (1.) The character of Nabal, *ver. 2, 3*. (2.) The humble request sent to him, *ver. 4—9*. (3.) His churlish answer, *ver. 10—12*. (4.) David's angry resentment of it, *ver. 13, 21, 22*. (5.) Abigail's prudent care to prevent the mischief it was likely to bring upon her family, *ver. 14—20*. (6.) Her address to David

to pacify him, *ver. 23—31*. (7.) David's favourable reception of her, *ver. 32—35*. (8.) The death of Nabal, *ver. 36—38*. (9.) Abigail's marriage to David, *ver. 39—44*.

1. **A**ND Samuel died, and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

We have here a short account of Samuel's death and burial.

1. Though he was a great man, and one that was admirably well qualified for publick service, yet he spent the latter end of his days in retirement and obscurity: not because he was superannuated, for he knew how to preside in a college of the prophets, *chap. xix. 20*. but because Israel had rejected him, for which God thus justly chastised them, and because his desire was to be quiet, and to enjoy himself and his God in the acts of devotion, now in advanced years, and in this desire God graciously indulged him. Let old people be willing to rest themselves, though it look like burying themselves alive.

2. Though he was a fast friend to David, for which Saul hated him, as also for dealing plainly with him, yet he died in peace, even in the worst of the days of Saul's tyranny, who, he sometimes feared, would kill him, *chap. xvi. ii*. Though Saul loved him not, yet he feared him, as Herod did John, and feared the people, for all knew him to be a prophet. Thus is Saul restrained from hurting him.

3. All Israel lamented him; and they had reason, for they had all a loss of him. His personal merits commanded this honour to be done him at his death: his former services to the publick, while he judged Israel, made this respect to his name and memory a just debt; it had been very ungrateful to have withheld it. The sons of the prophets had lost the founder and president of their college, and whatever weakened them was a publick loss: but that was not all, Samuel was a constant intercessor for Israel, prayed daily for them, *chap. xii. 23*. if he go, they part with the best friend they have. The loss is the more grievous at this juncture, when Saul is grown so outrageous, and David driven his country, never more need of Samuel than now, yet now he is removed. We will hope the Israelites lamented Samuel's death the more bitterly, because they remembered against themselves their own sin and folly in rejecting him, and desiring a king. Note, 1. Those have hard hearts that can bury their faithful ministers with dry eyes; that are not sensible of the loss of those that have prayed for them, and taught them the way of the Lord. 2. When God's providence removes our relations and friends from us, we ought to be humbled for our miscarriages towards them, while they were with us.

4. They buried him, not in the school of the prophets at Nain, but in his own house (or, perhaps, in the garden pertaining to it) at Ramah, where he was born.

5. David hereupon went down to the wilderness of Paran, retiring, perhaps, to mourn the more solemnly for the death of Samuel. Or rather, because now he had lost so good a friend, who was (and he hoped would be) a great support to him, he apprehended his danger to be greater than ever, and therefore withdrew to a wilderness, out of the limits of the land of Israel; and now it was, that he *dwelt in the tents of Kedar*, *Psal. cxx. 5*. In some part of this wilderness of Paran, Israel wandered when they came out of Egypt; the place would bring to mind God's care concerning them, and David might improve that for his own encouragement, now in his wilderness state.

2. And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel, and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish, and evil in his doings, and he was of the house of Caleb. 4. ¶ And David heard in the wilderness, that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: 6. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. 7. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. 8. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee: wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: (for we be come in a good day) give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9. And when Davids young men came, they spake to Nabal according

to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.
 10. ¶ And Nabal answered Davids servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now adays, that break away every man from his master. 11. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?

Here begins the story of Nabal.

1. A short account of him, who and what he was, *ver.* 2, 3. A man we should never have heard of, if there had not happened some communication between him and David. Observe, 1. His name; Nabal. A fool: So it signifies. It was wonder his parents would give him that name, and an ill omen of what proved to be his character: Yet indeed we all of us deserve to be so called, when we come into the world, for *Man is born like the wild Asses colt, and foolishness is bound up in our hearts.* 2. His family. He was of the house of Caleb, but was indeed of another spirit from him. He inherited Caleb's estate; for Maon and Carmel lay near Hebron, which was given to Caleb, *Josh.* xv. 54, 55.---xiv. 14. but he was far from inheriting his virtue. He was a disgrace to his family, and then it was no honour to him. *Degeneranti Genus Opprobrium.* The seventy, and some other ancient versions read it appellatively, not he was a Calebite, but he was a dogged man, of a curriish disposition, surly, and snappish, and always snarling. He was *ἄνθρωπος κυνικός*; a man that was a cynick. 3. His wealth. He was very great, *i. e.* very rich; for riches make men look great in the eye of the world, otherwise to one that takes his measures aright, he really looked very mean. Riches are common blessings, which God often gives to Nabals, to whom he gives neither wisdom nor grace. 4. His wife: Abigail: A woman of great understanding. Her name signifies, the joy of her father, yet he could not promise himself much joy of her, when he married her to such a husband, enquiring more after his wealth than after his wisdom. Many a child is thrown away upon a great heap of the muck of worldly wealth; married to that, and to nothing else that is desirable. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, but an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Many an Abigail is tied to a Nabal, and if it be so, be her understanding like Abigail's never so great, it will be little enough for her exercises. 5. His character. He had no sense, either of honour or honesty: Not of honour, for he was churlish, cross, and ill-humoured; not of honesty, for he was evil in his doings, hard and oppressive, and a man that cared not what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving, so he could but get and save. This is the character given of Nabal by him, who knows what every man is.

2. David's humble request to him, that he would send him some victuals for himself and his men.

(1.) It seems David was in such distress, that he would be glad to be beholden to him, and did in effect come a begging to his door: What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world, when so great a sot as Nabal was, abounds, and so great a saint as David was, suffers want! Once before we had David begging his bread, but then it was of Ahimelech the high-priest, to whom one would not grudge to stoop: But to send a begging to Nabal, was what such a spirit as David had, could not admit without some reluctance; yet if providence bring him to these straits, he will not say, that to beg he is ashamed. Yet see *Psal.* xxxvii. 25.

(2.) He chose a good time to send to Nabal, when he had many hands employed about him in shearing his sheep, for whom he was to make a plentiful entertainment, so that good cheer was stirring. Had he sent at another time, Nabal would have pretended he had nothing to spare, but now he could not have that excuse. It was usual to make feasts at their sheep-shearings, as appears by Absalom's feast on that occasion, 2 *Sam.* xiii. 24. for wool was one of the staple commodities of Canaan.

(3.) David ordered his men to deliver their message to him with a great deal of courtesy and respect. *Go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.* Tell him, I sent you to present my service to him, and to enquire how he doth, and his family, *ver.* 5. He puts words in their mouth, *ver.* 6. *Thus shall ye say to him that liveth,* (our translators add, in prosperity) as if those live indeed, that live as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them, whereas in truth, those that *live in pleasure are dead while they live,* 1 *Tim.* v. 6. This was, methinks, too high a complement to pass upon Nabal, to call him the man that liveth. David knew better things, that in God's favour is life; not in the world's smiles: and by the rough answer he was well enough served, for this too smooth address to such a muck-worm. Yet his good wishes were very commendable. *Peace be to thee,* all good both to soul and body: *Peace to thy house, and to all that thou hast.* Tell him, I am a hearty well-wisher to his health and prosperity. He bids them call him his son David, *ver.* 8. intimating, that, for his age and estate, David honoured him as a father; and therefore hoped to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

(4.) He pleaded the kindness which Nabal's shepherds had received from David, and his men; and one good turn requires another. He appeals to Nabal's own servants, and shews, that when

Davids soldiers were quartered among Nabal's shepherds, (1) They did not hurt them themselves, did them no injury, gave them no disturbance, were not a terror to them, nor took any of the lambs out of their flock: And considering the character of David's men, men in distress, and debt, and discontented, and the scarcity of provisions in his camp, it was not without a great deal of care and good management, that they were kept from plundering, (2.) They protected them from being hurt by others. David himself doth but intimate this, for he would not boast of his good offices, there was nothing missing to them, *ver.* 7. But Nabal's servants to whom he appealed went further, *ver.* 16. *They were a wall unto us, both by night and day.* David's soldiers were a guard to Nabal's shepherds, when the bands of the *Philistines* robbed the threshing floors, chap. xxiii. 1. and would have robbed the sheep folds: From those rapparees Nabal's flocks were protected by David's care, and therefore *let us find favour in thine eyes.* Those that have shewn kindness may justly expect to receive kindness.

(5.) He was very modest in his request. Though David was anointed king, he insists not upon royal dainties, but give whatsoever comes to thy hand, and we will be thankful for it: Beggars must not be choosers. They that deserved to have been served first, will now be glad of what is left. They plead, we come in a good day, a festival, when not only the provision is more plentiful, but the heart and hand uses to be more open and free than at other times: When much may be spared, and yet not be missed. He demands it not as a debt, either by way of tribute, as he was a king, or by way of contribution, as he was a general, but as a boon to a friend, that was his humble servant. David's servants delivered their message faithfully, and very handsomely, not doubting, but to go back well laden with provisions.

3. Nabal's churlish answer to this modest petition, *ver.* 10, 11. one could not have imagined it possible, that any man should be so very rude and ill-conditioned as Nabal was. David called himself his son, and asked bread, and a fish, but instead thereof he gave him a stone and a scorpion; not only denied him, but abused him. If he had not thought fit to send him any supplies, for fear of Ahimelech's fate, who paid dear for his kindness to David; yet he might have given a civil answer, and made the denial as modest as the request was: But instead of that he falls into a passion, as covetous men use to do when they are asked for any thing, thinking thus to cover one sin with another, and by abusing the poor to excuse themselves from relieving them: But God will not thus be mocked.

1. He speaks scornfully of David, as a sorry fellow not worth taking notice of. The Philistines could say of him, *This is David the king of the land, that slew his ten thousands,* chap. xxi. 11. yet Nabal his near neighbour, and one of the same tribe, takes on him, he doth not know him, or not know him to be a man of any merit or distinction, who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? He could not be ignorant, how much the country was obliged to David for his publick services, but his narrow soul thinks not of paying any part of that debt, nor so much as acknowledging it, but speaks of David as an inconsiderable man, obscure, and not to be regarded. Think it not strange, if great men and great merits be thus disgraced.

2. He upbraids him with his present distress, and takes occasion from it to represent him as an ill man, that was fitter to be set in the stocks for a vagrant, than to have any kindness shewn him. How naturally doth he speak the churlish clownish language of those that hate to give alms: *There be many servants now a days* (as if there had been none such in former days) *that break every man from his master,* suggesting that David was one of them himself, he might have kept his place with his master Saul, and then he needed not have sent to me for provisions: Also that he entertained and harboured those that were fugitives like himself. It would make ones blood rise to hear so great and good a man as David was, thus vilified and reproached by such a base churl as Nabal was, *But the vile person will speak villany,* Isa. xxxii. 5, 6, 7. If men bring themselves into straits by their own folly, yet they are to be pitied and helped, and not trampled upon and starved: But David is reduced to this distress not by any fault, no nor any indiscretion of his own, but purely by the good services he had done to his country, and the honours which his God had put upon him, and yet is represented as a fugitive and a runagate. Let this help us to bear such reproaches and misrepresentations of us with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them, that it has often been the lot of the excellent ones of the earth. Some of the best men that ever the World was blest with, were counted as the *off-scouring of all things,* 1 *Cor.* iv. 13.

3. He insists much upon the property he had in the provisions of his table, and will by no means admit any body to share in them. It is my bread and my flesh, ay, and my water too (though it is *usus communis aquarum*) and it is prepared for my shearers, priding himself in it, that it was all his own; and who denied it? Who offered to dispute his title? But this he thinks will justify him in keeping it all to himself, and giving David none; for may he not do what he will with his own? Whereas we mistake, if we think we are absolute lords of what we have, and may do what we please with it: No, we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but his that intrusted

us with it. Riches are the *παλλαγία* (*Luke xvi. 12.*) they are anothers, and we ought not to talk too much of their being our own.

12. So Davids young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. 13. And David said unto his men, Gird you on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword, and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men, and two hundred abode by the stuff. 14. ¶ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabals wife, saying, behold, David, sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. 15. But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. 16. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them, keeping the sheep. 17. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do: for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

Here is, 1. The report made to David of the abuse Nabal had given to his messengers, *ver. 12.* They turned their way, they shewed their displeasure as became them to do, by breaking off abruptly from such a churl, but prudently governed themselves so well, as not to render railing for railing, nor to call him as he deserved, much less to take by force what ought of right to have been given them, but came and told David, let him do as he thought fit. Christ's servants when they are thus abused, must leave it to him to plead his own cause, and wait till he appear in it. The servant shewed his lord what affronts he had received, but did not return them, *Luke xiv. 21.*

2. David's hasty resolution hereupon. He girded on his sword, and ordered his men to do so too, to the number of four hundred, *ver. 13.* And what he said we are told, *ver. 21, 22.* (1.) He repented the kindness he had done to Nabal, and looks upon it as thrown away upon him: He said, *Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow has in the wilderness,* I thought to have obliged him, and made him my friend, but I see it is to no purpose: He has no sense of gratitude, nor is he capable of receiving the impressions of a good turn, else he could not have used me thus. He hath *requited me evil for good*: But when we are thus requited, we would not repent of the good we have done, nor be backward to do good another time. God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and why may not we? (2.) He determined to destroy Nabal, and all that belonged to him, *ver. 22.* Here David did not act like himself: His resolution was bloody, to cut off all the males of Nabal's house, and spare none, man or man-child. The ratification of his resolution was passionate: *So, and more also do God,* (he was going to say to me, but that would better become Saul's mouth (*chap. xiv. 44.* than David's, and therefore he decently turns it off) *to the enemies of David.* *Is this thy voice, O David?* Can the man after God's own heart, speak thus unadvisedly with his lips? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, where he should have learned patience, and yet so passionate? Is this he that used to be dumb and deaf when he was reproached, *Psaln xxxviii. 13.* that but the other day spared him who sought his life, and yet now will not spare any thing that belongs to him, who had only put an affront upon his messengers? He that at other times used to be calm and considerate, is now put into such a heat by a few hard words, that nothing will atone for them but the blood of a whole family. Lord, what is man! what are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves, to try them, that they may know what is in their heart? From Saul David expected injuries, and against those he was prepared, and stood upon his guard, and so kept his temper; but from Nabal he expected kindness, and therefore the affront he gave him was a surprize to him, found him off his guard, and by a sudden and unexpected attack put him for the present into disorder. What need have we to pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

3. The account given of this matter to Abigail, by one of the servants, who was more considerate than the rest, *ver. 14.* Had this servant spoken to Nabal, and shewed him the danger he had exposed himself to by his own rudeness, he would have said, servants are now a days so faucy, and so apt to prescribe, that there is no enduring them, and, it may be, would have turned him out of doors: But Abigail, being a woman of good understanding, took cognizance of the matter, even from her servant, who, (1.) Did David right in commending him, and his men for their civility to Nabal's shepherds, *ver. 15, 16.* The men were very good to us, and though they were themselves exposed, yet they protected us, and were a wall unto us. They, who do that which is good, one way or other, shall have the praise of the same. Nabal's own servant will be a witness for David, that he is a man of honour and conscience, whatever Nabal himself saith of him. And, (2.) He did Nabal no

wrong in condemning him, for his rudeness to David's messengers. *He railed on them, ver. 14.* He flew upon them, so the word is, with an intolerable rage: For say they, it is his usual practice, *ver. 17.* He is such a son of Belial, so very morose and untractable, that a man cannot speak to him, but he flies into a passion immediately. Abigail knew it too well her self. 3. He did Abigail and the whole family a kindness, in making her sensible what was likely to be the consequence: he knew David so well, that he had reason to think he would highly resent the affront, and, perhaps, had had information of David's orders to his men to march this way, for he is very positive *evil is determined against our master and all his household,* himself, among the rest, would be involved in it. Therefore he desires his mistress to consider what was to be done for their common safety. They could not resist the force David would bring down upon them, nor had they time to send to Saul to protect them, something therefore must be done to pacify David.

18. ¶ Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 19. And she said unto her servants, go on before me, behold, I come after you: but she told not her husband Nabal. 20. And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men came down against her, and she met them. 21. (Now David had said, surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall.) 23. And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground. 24. And fell at his feet, and said, upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be, and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 26. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thy self with thine own hand; now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. 27. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 28. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house: because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. 29. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. 30. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 31. That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

We have here an account of Abigail's prudent management for the preserving of her husband and family, from the destruction that was just coming upon them: And we find, that she did her part admirably well, and fully answered her character. The passion of fools oft make those breaches in a little time, which the wife, with all their wisdom, have much ado to make up again. It is hard to say, whether Abigail was more miserable in such a husband, or Nabal happy in such a wife. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, to protect as well as adorn, and will do him good, and not evil. Wisdom in such a case as this, was better than weapons of war. 1. It was her wisdom, what she did to do it quickly, and without delay, she made haste, *ver. 18.* It was no time to trifle or linger, when all was in danger. They that desire conditions of peace must send when the enemy is yet a great way off, *Luke xiv. 32.*

(2.) It was her wisdom what she did to do it herself, because, being a woman of great conduct, and very happy address, she knew better how to manage it, than any servant she had. The virtuous woman, will herself *look well to the ways of her household*, and not devolve it wholly upon others.

Abigail must endeavour to atone for Nabal's faults; now he had been two ways rude to David's messengers, and in them to David, 1. He had denied them the provisions they asked for. 2. He had given them a parcel of foul words, and a deal of provoking language. Now,

1. By a most generous present, Abigail atones for his denial of their request. If Nabal had given them what came next to hand, they had gone away thankful, but Abigail prepares the very best the house afforded, and abundance of it, (*ver. 18.*) according to the usual entertainments of those times: Not only *bread and flesh*, but *raisins and figs*, which were their dried sweet-meats: Nabal grudged them *water*, but she took *two bottles* (casks or rundlets) of *wine*, loaded her asses with these provisions, and sent them before, for a *gift pacifieth anger*, Prov. xxi. 14. Jacob thus pacifieth Esau. When the *instruments of the churl are evil, the liberal deviseth liberal things*, and loseth nothing by it, for by *liberal things shall he stand*, Isa. xxxii. 7, 8. Abigail not only lawfully, but laudably disposed of all these goods of her husband's without his knowledge, and when she had reason to think, if he had known, he would not have consented to it, because it was not to gratify her own pride, or vanity, but for the necessary defence of him and his family, which otherwise had been inevitably ruined. Husbands and wives, for their common good and benefit, have a joint interest in their worldly possessions, but if either waste or unduly spend any way, it is a robbing of the other.

2. By a most obliging carriage and charming speech, she atones for the abusive language which Nabal had given them. She met David upon the march, big with resentment, and in the mind he was in, meditating the destruction of Nabal, *ver. 20.* but with all possible expressions of complaisance and respect she humbly begs his favour, and solicites him to pass by the offence. Her carriage was very submissive, *she bowed herself to the ground before David*, *ver. 23.* and *fell at his feet*, *ver. 24.* Yielding pacifieth great offences. She puts her self into the place and posture of a penitent, and of a petitioner, and was not ashamed to do it, when it was for the good of her house, in the sight, both of her own servants, and of David's soldiers. She humbly begs of David, that he will give her the hearing, *let thy handmaid speak in thy audience*: But she needed not thus bespeak his attention and patience, what she said was sufficient to command it; for certainly nothing could be more fine, nor more moving. No topick of argument is left untouched, every thing is well placed, and well expressed, most pertinently and pathetically urged and improved to the best advantage, with such a force of natural rhetorick, as cannot easily be paralleled.

1. She speaks to him, all along, with the deference and respect that was due to so great and good a man, calls him, my lord, over and over, to expiate her husband's crime in saying, who is David? She doth not upbraid him with the heat of his passion, though he deserved to be reproved for it, nor doth she tell him how ill it became his character, but endeavours to sweeten him, and bring him to a better temper; not doubting, but, that then his own conscience would upbraid him with it.

2. She takes the blame of the ill treatment of his messengers upon her self, *upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be*, *ver. 24.* If thou wilt be angry, be angry with me, rather than with my poor husband, and look upon it as *the trespass of thine handmaid*, *ver. 28.* Sordid spirits care not how much others suffer for their faults, while generous spirits can be content to suffer for the faults of others. Abigail here discovered the sincerity and strength of her conjugal affection; and concern for her family; whatever Nabal was, he was her husband.

3. She excuses her husband's fault, by imputing it to his natural weakness, and want of understanding, *ver. 25.* *Let not my lord take notice of his rudeness and ill manners*, for it is like him; it is not the first time that he has carried himself so ill-favouredly, he must be born with, for it is for want of wit; *Nabal is his name*, (which signifies a fool) *and folly is with him*. It was owing to his folly, not his malice: He is simple, but not spiteful. Forgive him, for he knows not what he doth. What she said was too true, and she said it to excuse his fault, and prevent his ruin, else she had not done well to give such an ill character as this of her own husband, whom she ought to make the best of, and not to speak ill of.

4. She pleads her own ignorance of the matter. *I saw not the young men*, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand: intimating hereby, that though her husband was foolish and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her, and take her advice.

5. She takes it for granted, that she has gained her point already, perhaps, perceiving by David's countenance, that he began to change his mind, *ver. 26.* *Seeing the Lord hath withholden thee*. She depends not upon her own reasonings, but God's grace to mollify him, and doubts not but that grace would work powerfully upon him; and then *let all thine enemies be as Nabal*, i. e. If thou forbear to avenge thy self, no doubt, God will avenge thee on him, as he will on all other thine enemies. Or it inti-

mates, that it was below him, to take vengeance on so weak and impotent an enemy as Nabal was, who, as he would do him no kindreds, so he could do him no hurt, for he needed with no more concerning his enemies, than that they might be as unable to resist him as Nabal was. Perhaps, she refers to his sparing of Saul, when but the other day he had him at his mercy; didst thou forbear to avenge thy self on that lion that would devour thee, and wilt thou shed the blood of this dog, that can but bark at thee. The very mentioning of what he was about to do, to shed blood, and to avenge himself, was enough to work upon such a tender gracious spirit as David had, and it should seem, by his reply, *ver. 33.* it affected him.

6. She makes a tender of the present she had brought, but speaks of it as unworthy of David's acceptance; and therefore desires it might be given to the *young men that followed him*, *ver. 27.* and particularly to those ten that were his messengers to Nabal, whom he had treated so rudely.

7. She applauds David for the good services he had done against the common enemies of his country; the glory of which great achievement, she hoped he would not stain, by any personal revenges. *My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord* against the Philistines, and therefore he will leave it to God to fight his battles against those that affront him, *ver. 28.* *Evil has not been found in thee all thy days*: Thou never yet didst wrong to any of thy countrymen, (though prosecuted as a traitor) and therefore thou wilt not begin now, nor do a thing, which Saul will improve for the justifying of his malice against thee.

8. She foretels the glorious issue of his present troubles. It is true, *Saul pursues thee, and seeks thy life*, (she names him not out of respect to his present character as king) but thou needest not look with so sharp and jealous an eye upon every one that affronts thee, for all these storms that now ruffle thee will be blown over shortly. She speaks it with assurance, (1.) That God would keep him safe. *The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the lord thy God*, i. e. God shall hold thy soul in life, as the expression is *Psalms lxvi. 9.* as we hold those things tight which are bundled up, or which are precious to us, *Psalms cxvi. 15.* Shall be *treasured up in the treasure of lives*; so the Chaldee, under lock and key as our treasure is; thou shalt abide under the special protection of the divine providence. *The bundle of life is with the Lord our God*, for in his hand our breath is, and our times: Those are safe, and may be easy, that have him for their protector. The Jews understand this, not only of the *life that now is*, but of that *which is to come*, even the happiness of separate souls, and therefore use it commonly as an inscription on their grave-stones: Here we have laid the body, but trusting, that *the soul is bound up in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God*: There it is safe, while the dust of the body is scattered. 2. That God would make him victorious over their enemies. Their souls he shall *sling out*, *ver. 29.* The stone is bound up in the sling, but it is in order to be thrown out again; so the souls of the godly shall be bundled as corn for the barn, but the souls of the wicked as tares for the fire. 3. That God would settle him in wealth and power, *the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house*, and no enemy thou hast can hinder it; therefore *forgive this trespass*, i. e. shew mercy, as thou hopest to find mercy. God will make thee great, and it is the glory of great men to pass by offences.

9. She desires him to consider, how much more comfortable it would be to him in the reflection, to have forgiven this affront, than to have revenged it, *ver. 30, 31.* She reserves this argument for the last, as a very powerful one, with so good a man: That the less he indulged his passion, the more he consulted his peace, and the repose of his own conscience, which, every wise man will be tender of. 1. She cannot but think, that if he should avenge himself, it would afterwards be a grief, and an offence of heart to him. Many have done that in a heat, which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetness of revenge is soon turned into bitterness. 2. She is confident, that if he pass by the offence, it will afterwards be no grief to him; but, on the contrary, it would yield him unspeakable satisfaction, that his wisdom and grace had got the better of his passion. *Note*, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider how it will appear in the reflection. Let us never do any thing, for which our own consciences will afterwards have occasion to upbraid us, and which we shall look back upon with regret. *My heart shall not reproach me*.

Lastly, She recommends her self to his favour, *when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid*. As one that kept thee from doing that which would have disgraced thine honour, and disquieted thy conscience, and would have made but an ill figure in thine history. We have reason to remember those with respect and gratitude, who have been instrumental to keep us from sin.

32. ¶ And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33. And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging my self with my own hand. 34. For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth,

which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely, there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall. 35. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wife reprovcr upon an obedient ear, Prov. xxv. 12. Abigail was a wife reprovcr of David's passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof, according to his own principle, *Psalms cxli. 5. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* Never was such an admonition either better given, or better taken.

1. David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check in a sinful way, *ver. 32. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me.* Note, 1. God is to be acknowledged in all the kindnesses that our friends do us, either for soul or body. Whoever meets us with counsel, direction, comfort, caution, or seasonable reproof, we must see God sending them. 2. We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are means of preventing sin.

2. He gives Abigail thanks for interposing so opportunely between him and the mischief he was about to do. *Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou,* *ver. 33.* most people think it enough if they take a reproof patiently, but we meet with few that will take it thankfully, that will commend those that give it them, and accept it as a favour. Abigail could not rejoice so much, that she had been instrumental to save her husband and family from death, but David rejoiced as much, that she had been instrumental to save him and his men from sin.

3. He seems very apprehensive of the great danger he was in, which magnified the mercy of his deliverance. 1. He speaks of the sin as very great. He was coming to shed blood, a sin which, when he was his own man, he had a great horror of, witness his prayer, *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness*: he was coming to *avenge himself with his own hand*, and that is stepping into the throne of God, who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.* The more heinous any sin is, the greater mercy it is to be kept from it. He seems to aggravate the evil of his design with this, that it would have been an injury to so wise and good a woman as Abigail; God has *kept me back from hurting thee*, *ver. 34.* Or, perhaps, at the first sight of Abigail he was conscious of a thought to do her a mischief for offering to oppose him; and therefore reckons it a great mercy that God gave him patience to hear her speak. 2. He speaks of the danger of his falling into it as very imminent, *except thou hadst hastened*, the bloody execution had been done. The nearer we were to the commission of sin, the greater was the mercy of a seasonable restraint: *Almost gone*, *Psalms lxxiii. 2.* and yet upheld.

4. He dismisseth her with an answer of peace, *ver. 35.* He doth, in effect, own himself overcome by her eloquence; *I have hearkened to thy voice*, and will not prosecute the intended revenge, for *I have accepted thy person*, am well pleased with thee, and what thou hast said. Note, 1. Wise and good men will hear reason, and let that rule them, though it come from those that are every way their inferiors, and though their passions are up, and their spirits provoked. 2. Oaths cannot bind us to that which is sinful. David had solemnly vowed the death of Nabal; he did ill to make such a vow, but he had done worse if he had performed it. 3. A wise and faithful reproof is oft better taken, and speeds better than we expected; such is the hold God has of mens consciences. See *Prov. xxviii. 23.*

36. ¶ And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king, and Nabals heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. 37. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as a stone*. 38. And it came to pass about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died. 39. ¶ And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife. 41. And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let* thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. 42. And Abigail

hastened, and rose, and rode upon an ass, with five dam-sels of hers that went after her: and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they were also both of them his wives. 44. ¶ But Saul had given Michal his daughter, Davids wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which *was* of Gallim.

We are now to attend Nabal's funeral, and Abigail's wedding.

(1.) Nabal's funeral. The apostle speaks of some that were *twice dead*, Jude 12. we have here Nabal thrice dead, though but just now wonderfully rescued from the sword of David, and delivered from so great a death; for the preservations of wicked men, are but reservations for some further sorer strokes of divine wrath. Here is,

1. *Nabal dead drunk*, *ver. 36.* Abigail came home, and it should seem, he had so many people, and so much plenty, about him, that he neither missed her, nor the provisions she took to David: but she found him in the midst of his jollity, little thinking how near he was to ruin, by one whom he had foolishly made his enemy. Sinners are often most secure, when they are most in danger, and destruction is at the door. Observe, 1. How extravagant he was in the entertainment of his company. *He held a feast like the feast of a king*, so magnificent and abundant, though his guests were but his sheep-shearers. This abundance might have been so, if he had considered what God gave him his estate for, not to look great with, but to do good with. It is very common for those that are most niggardly in any act of piety or charity, to be most profuse in gratifying a vain humour, or a base lust. A mite grudged to God and his poor; but to make a *fair shew in the flesh*, gold is lavished out of the bag. If Nabal had not answered his name, he would never have been thus secure and jovial, till he had enquired whether he was safe from David's resentments, but (as bishop Hall observes) thus foolish are carnal men, that give themselves over to their pleasures, before they have taken any care to make their peace with God. 2. How sottish he was in the indulgence of his own brutish appetite. *He was very drunk.* A sign he was Nabal, a fool, that could not use his plenty, but he must abuse it; could not be pleasant with his friends, but he must make a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that a man has but a little wisdom, nor a surer way to ruin the little he has, than drinking to excess. Nabal, that never thought he could bestow too little in charity, never thought he could bestow too much in luxury. Abigail finding him in this condition, (and, probably, those about him little better, when the master of the feast set them so ill an example) she had enough to do to set the disordered house to rights a little, but told Nabal nothing of what she had done with reference to David, nothing of his folly in provoking David, of his danger, or of his deliverance, for, being drunk, he was as incapable to hear reason, as he was to speak it. To give good advice to those that are in drink, is to *cast pearls before swine*; it is better to stay till they are sober.

2. Nabal again dead with melancholy, *ver. 37.* Next morning, when he was come to himself a little, his wife told him how near to destruction he had brought himself and his family, by his own rudeness; and with what difficulty she had interposed to prevent it; and, upon this, *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.* Some suggest, that the expence of the satisfaction made to David, by the present Abigail brought him, broke his heart: it seems rather, that the apprehension he now had of the danger he had narrowly escaped, put him into a consternation, and seized his spirits, so that he could not recover it. He grew sullen, and said little, ashamed of his own folly, put out of countenance by his wife's wisdom. How is he changed! his heart over night merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; deceitful are carnal pleasures; so transient the laughter of the fool; *the end of that mirth is heaviness.* Drunkards are sometimes sad, when they reflect upon their own folly. Joy in God makes the heart always light. Abigail could never, by her wise reasonings, bring Nabal to repentance; but now, by her faithful reproofs, she brings him to despair.

3. Nabal at last dead indeed. *About ten days after*, when he had been kept so long under this pressure and pain, *the Lord smote him that he died*, *ver. 38.* and it should seem he never held up his head; it is just with God (saith bishop Hall) that they who live without grace, should die without comfort, neither can we expect better, while we go on in our sins. Here is no lamentation made for Nabal; he departed without being desired; and every one wished that never greater loss come to the country. David, when he heard the news of his death, *gave God thanks* for it, *ver. 39.* He blessed God, 1. That he had kept him from killing him; *Blessed be the Lord, who hath kept his servant from evil.* He rejoiceth that Nabal died a natural death, and not by his hand. We should take all occasions to mention and magnify God's goodness to us in keeping us from sin. 2. That he had taken the work into his own hands, and had vindicated David's honour, and not suffered him to go unpunished, who had been abusive to him: hereby his interest would be confirmed, and all would stand in awe of him, as one for whom God fought. 3. That he had thereby encouraged him, and all others, to commit their cause to God, when they are

any way injured, with an assurance that, in his own time, he will right them, if they sit still and leave it to him.

(2.) Abigail's wedding. David was so charmed with the beauty of her person, and the uncommon prudence of her conduct and address, that as soon as was convenient, after he heard she was a widow, he sent a courting to her, *ver.* 39. not doubting, but that she who approved herself so good a wife to so ill a husband as Nabal was, would make him a good wife: and having taken notice of her respect to him, and her confidence of his coming to the throne, *1.* He courted by proxy, his affairs, perhaps, not permitting him to come himself. *2.* She received the address with great modesty and humility, *ver.* 41. reckoning herself unworthy of the honour, yet having such a respect for him, that she would gladly be one of the poorest servants in his family, to wash the feet of the other servants. None so fit to be preferred as those that can thus humble themselves. *3.* She agreed to the proposal, went with his messengers, took a retinue with her, agreeable to her quality, and *she became his wife*, *ver.* 42. She did not upbraid him with his present distresses, and ask him how he could maintain her, but valued him, *(1.)* Because she knew he was a very good man. *(2.)* Because she believed he would, in due time, be a very great man: she married him in faith, not questioning, but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet God's promise to him would at length be fulfilled. Thus they who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him. Lastly, On this occasion, we have some account of David's wives. *1.* One that he had lost before he married Abigail; Michal, Saul's daughter, his first, and the wife of his youth, to whom he would have been constant, if she would have been so to him, but Saul had given her to another, *ver.* 44. in token of his displeasure against him, and disclaiming the relation of a father in law to him. *2.* Another that he married besides Abigail, *ver.* 43. and, as should seem, before her, for she is named first, *chap.* xxvii. *3.* David was carried away by the corrupt custom of those times, but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it so now: Messiah is come, and the times of reformation, *Mat.* xix. 4, 5. Perhaps, Saul's defrauding David of his only rightful wife, was the occasion of his running into this irregularity: for when the knot of conjugal affection is once loosed it is scarce ever tied fast again. When David could not keep his first wife, he thought that would excuse him, if he did not keep to his second. But we deceive our selves, if we think to make others faults a cloke for our own.

C H A P. XXVI.

David's troubles from Saul here begin again; and the clouds return after the rain, when one would have hoped the storm had blown over, and the sky had cleared up on that side; but after Saul had owned his fault in persecuting David, and David's title to the crown, yet here he revives the prosecution, so perfectly lost was he to all sense of honour and virtue. *1.* The Ziphites informed him where David was, *ver.* 1. and thereupon he marches out with a considerable force in quest of him, *ver.* 2, 3. *2.* David gained intelligence of his motions, *ver.* 4. and took a view of his camp, *ver.* 5. *3.* He and one of his men ventured into his camp in the night, and found him and all his guards fast asleep, *ver.* 6, 7. *4.* David, though much urged to it by his companions, would not take away Saul's life; but only carried off his spear and his cruse of water, *ver.* 8,—12. *5.* He produced those as a further witness for him, that he did not design any ill to Saul, and reasoned with him upon it, *ver.* 13,—20. *6.* Saul was hereby convinced of his error, and once more let fall the prosecution, *ver.* 21,—25. The story is much like that which we had, *chap.* 24. In both, David is delivered out of Saul's hand, and Saul out of David's.

1. **A**ND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? *2.* Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. *3.* And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon by the way: but David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. *4.* David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. *5.* And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

Here, *1.* Saul gets information of David's motions, and acts offensively. The Ziphites came to him, and told him where David now was; in the same place where he was when they formerly betrayed him, *chap.* xxiii. *19.* Perhaps, (though it is not mentioned) Saul had given them intimation under-hand, that he continued his design against David, and would be glad of their assistance: if

not, they were very officious to Saul, suspecting what would please him, and very malicious against David, to whom they despaired of ever reconciling themselves, and therefore they stirred up Saul (who needed no such spur) against him, *ver.* 1. For ought we know, Saul had continued in the same good mind that he was in, (*chap.* xxiv. *17.*) and would not have given David this fresh trouble, if the Ziphites had not put him on. See what need we have to pray to God, that, since we have so much of the tinder of corruption in our own hearts, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from us, lest, if they come together, we be set on fire of hell. Saul readily caught at the discovery, and went down to the place where David hid himself, with an army of three thousand men, *ver.* 2. How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them, and return with the dog to their vomit.

2. David gets information of Saul's motions, and acts defensively. He did not march out to meet and fight him, he fought only his own safety, not Saul's ruin, therefore he abode in the wilderness, *ver.* 3. putting thereby a great force upon himself, and curbing the bravery of his own spirit, by a silent retirement, shewing more true valour, than he could have done by an irregular resistance. *1.* He had spies who ascertained him of Saul's descent; that he was come in very deed, *ver.* 4. for he would not believe that Saul could have dealt so basely with him, till he had the utmost evidence of it. *2.* He made his own eyes his spies to observe how Saul was encamped, *ver.* 5. He came towards the place where Saul and his men had pitched their tents, so near, as to be able, undiscovered, to take a view of their entrenchments, probably, in the dusk of the evening.

6. Then answered David, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? and Abishai said, I will go down with thee. *7.* So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. *8.* Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear, even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. *9.* And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? *10.* David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle, and perish. *11.* The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. *12.* So David took the spear, and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster, and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

Here is, *1.* David's bold adventure into Saul's camp, in the night, accompanied only by his kinsman Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. He proposed it to him, and to another of his confidants, *ver.* 6. but the other, either declined it, as too dangerous an enterprize, or at least was content that Abishai, who was forward to it, should run the risque of it, rather than himself. Whether David was prompted to do this by his own courage, or by an extraordinary impression upon his spirits, or by the oracle, doth not appear; but, like Gideon, he ventured through the guards, with a special assurance of the divine protection.

2. The posture he found the camp in. Saul lay sleeping in the trench, or, as some read it, in his chariot, and in the midst of his carriages, with his spear stuck in the ground by him, to be ready, if his quarters should be beaten up, *ver.* 7. and all the soldiers, even those that were appointed to stand sentinel, were fast asleep, *ver.* 12. thus were their eyes closed, and their hands bound, for a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them; something extraordinary there was in it, that they should all be asleep together, and so fast asleep, that David and Abishai walked and talked among them, and yet none of them stirred: sleep, when God gives it to his beloved, is their rest and refreshment; but he can, when he pleaseth, make it to his enemies their imprisonment. Thus are the stout-hearted spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, *Psal.* lxxvi. 5, 6. It was a deep sleep from the Lord, who has the command of the powers of nature, and makes them to serve his purposes as he pleaseth. Whom God will disable or destroy, he binds up with a spirit of slumber, *Rom.* xi. 8. How helpless do Saul and all his forces lie, all, in effect, disarmed and chained, and yet nothing is done at them, but only they are rocked asleep. How easily

ly can God weaken the strongest, befool the wisest, and baffle the most watchful? Let all his friends therefore trust him, and all his enemies fear him.

3. Abishai's request to David for a commission to dispatch Saul, with the spear that stuck at his bolster, which (now he lay so fair) he undertook to do at one blow, *ver. 8.* He would not urge David to kill him himself, because he had declined it before, when he had a like opportunity; but he begged earnestly that he would give him leave to do it; pleading that he was his enemy, not only cruel and implacable, but false and perfidious, whom no reason would rule, nor kindness work upon, and that *God had now delivered him into his hand*, and did, in effect, bid him strike. The last advantage he had of this kind was indeed but accidental, when Saul happened into the cave with him at the same time; but in this there was something extraordinary; the deep sleep that was fallen on Saul, and all his guards, was manifestly from the Lord, so that it was a special providence which gave him this opportunity, he ought not therefore to let it slip.

4. David's generous refusal to suffer any harm to be done to Saul, and in it a resolute adherence to his principles of loyalty, *ver. 9.* David charged Abishai not to destroy him; would not only not do it himself, but not permit another to do it. And he gave two reasons for it. 1. It would be a sinful affront to God's ordinance, Saul was the Lord's anointed, king of Israel, by the special appointment and nomination of the God of Israel, the power that was; and to resist him was to *resist the ordinance of God*, Rom. xiii. 2. no man could do it and be guiltless; the thing he feared was guilt, and his concern more for his innocency than his safety. 2. It would be a sinful anticipation of God's providence; God had sufficiently shewed him, in Nabal's case, that, if he left it to him to do him right, he would do it in due time; encouraged therefore by his experience, in that instance, he resolves to wait till God shall think fit to avenge him on Saul, and he will by no means *avenge himself*, *ver. 10.* *The Lord shall smite him*, as he did Nabal, with some sudden stroke, or he shall *die in battle*, (as it proved he did soon after) or however, *his day shall come to die* a natural death, and David will contentedly wait till then, rather than force his way to the promised crown by any indirect methods: the temptation indeed was very strong, but if he do it, he sins against God, and therefore he resists the temptation with the utmost resolution, *ver. 11.* *The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed*, no, I will never do it, nor suffer it to be done. Thus bravely doth he prefer his conscience before his interest, and trust God with the issue.

5. The improvement he made of this opportunity, for the further evidencing of his own integrity. He and Abishai carried away the spear and cruse of water which Saul had by his bed-side, *ver. 12.* and, which was very strange, none of all the guards were aware of them: if a physician had given them the strongest opiate, or stupifying dose, they could not have been faster locked up with sleep. Saul's spear, which he had by him for defence, and his cup of water, which he had for his refreshment, were both stolen from him while he slept. Thus do we lose our strength and our comfort, when we are careless and secure, and off our watch.

13. ¶ Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off, (a great space being between them:) 14. And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? 15. And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. 16. This thing is not good that thou hast done: as the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master the LORD's anointed: and now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water, that was at his bolster. 17. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. 18. And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? 19. Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go serve other gods. 20. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come up to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

David being got safe from Saul's camp himself, and having brought with him proofs sufficient that he had been there, posts himself conveniently, so as that they might hear him, and yet not reach him, *ver. 13.* and then begins to reason with them upon what had past.

1. He reasons ironically with Abner, and plainly banters him. David knew very well it was from the mighty power of God, that Abner and the rest of the guards were cast into so deep a sleep, and that his immediate hand was in it. But he reproacheth Abner, as unworthy to be captain of the life-guards, who could sleep, when the king his master lay so much exposed. By this it appears that the hand of God locked them up in this deep sleep, that as soon as ever David was got out of danger, a very little thing awakened them, even David's voice at a great distance roused them, *ver. 14.* Abner got up (we may suppose it early in a summer's morning) and enquired who called and disturbed the king's repose. It is I, saith David, and then he upbraids him with his sleeping, when he should have been upon his guard. Perhaps, Abner looking upon David as a despicable enemy, and one that there was no danger from, had neglected to set a watch; however, he himself ought to have been more wakeful. David, to put him into a confusion, tells him, 1. That he had lost his honour, *ver. 15.* *Art not thou a man?* So the word is, a man in office, that art bound, by the duty of thy place, to inspect the soldiery? Art not thou in reputation for a valiant man? So thou wouldest be esteemed; a man of such courage and conduct as that there is none like thee; but now thou art ashamed for ever: Thou a general! Thou a sluggard! 2. That he had deserved to lose his head, *ver. 16.* *Ye are all worthy to die*, by martial law, for being off your guard, when you had the king himself asleep in the midst of you. *Ecce signum.* See where the king's spear is, in the hand of him whom the king himself is pleased to count his enemy. They that took away this, might as easily and safely have taken away his life. Now see who are the king's best friends; you that neglected him, and left him exposed, or I that protected him, when he was exposed. You pursue me as worthy to die, and irritate Saul against me; but who is worthy to die now? Note; Sometimes those that unjustly condemn others, are justly left to fall into condemnation themselves.

2. He reasons seriously and affectionately with Saul. By this time he was so well awake as to hear what was said, and to discern who said it, *ver. 17.* *Is this thy voice, my son David?* In the same manner he had expressed his relentings, *chap. xxiv. 16.* he had given his wife to another, and yet calls him son: thirsted after his blood, and yet is glad to hear his voice. Those are bad indeed that have never any convictions of good, nor any good expressions. And now David has as fair opportunity of reaching Saul's conscience, as he had just now of taking away his life: this he lays hold on, though not of that, and enters into a close argument with him, concerning the trouble he still continued to give him, endeavouring to persuade him to let fall the prosecution, and be reconciled.

1. He complains of the very melancholy condition he was brought into by the enmity of Saul against him. Two things he laments. 1. That he was driven from his master, and from his business, *My Lord pursues after his servant*, *ver. 18.* How gladly would I serve thee, as formerly, if my service might be accepted, but, instead of being owned as a servant, I am pursued as a rebel, and my lord is my enemy, and he, whom I would follow with respect, I am constrained to flee from. 2. That he was driven from his God and from his religion; and this was a much greater grievance than the former, *ver. 19.* They have driven me out from the inheritance of the Lord, have made Canaan too hot for me, at least the inhabited parts of it, and have forced me into the deserts and mountains, and will, ere long, oblige me quite to quit the country. And that which troubled him, was not so much that he was driven out from his own inheritance, as that he was driven out from the inheritance of the Lord, the holy land. It should be more comfortable to us to think of God's title to our estates, and his interest in them, than of our own; and that with them we may honour him, than that with them we may maintain our selves. Nor was it so much his trouble that he was constrained to live among strangers, as that he was constrained to live among the worshippers of strange gods, and was thereby thrust into temptation to join with them in their idolatrous worships. His enemies did, in effect, send him to go serve other gods, and, perhaps, he had heard that some of them had spoken to that purpose of him. They that forbid our attendance on God's ordinances, do what in them lies to estrange us from God, and to make us heathens. If David had not been a man of extraordinary grace, and firmness to his religion, the ill usage he met with from his own prince and people, who were Israelites, and worshippers of the true God, would have prejudiced him against the religion they professed, and have driven him to communicate with idolaters. If these be Israelites, might he have said, let me live and die with Philistines; and that it had not that effect was no thanks to them. We are to reckon that the greatest injury that can be done us, which exposeth us to sin. Of those who thus led David into temptation, he here saith, *Cursed be they before the Lord.* Those fall under a curse that thrust out those whom God receives, and send those to the devil, who are dear to God.

2. He insists upon his own innocence. *What have I done, or what evil is in mine hand?* *ver. 18.* He had the testimony of his consci-

conscience for him, that he had never done, nor ever designed any mischief to the person, honour, or government, of his prince, nor to any of the interests of his country : he had lately had Saul's own testimony concerning him, *chap. xxiv. 17. Thou art more righteous than I.* It was very unreasonable and wicked for Saul to pursue him as a criminal, when he could not charge him with any crime.

3. He endeavours to convince Saul that his pursuit of him was not only an ill thing, but a mean thing, and much below him. *The king of Israel, whose dignity is great, and who has so much other work to do, is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains, ver. 20.* The pursuit a poor game for the king of Israel to catch at. He compares himself to a partridge, a very innocent harmless bird, that, when attempts are made upon its life, flies if it can, but makes no resistance. And would Saul bring the flower of his army into the field, only to hunt one poor partridge? What a disparagement was this to his honour! What a stain would it be to his memory! To trample upon so weak and patient, as well as so innocent, an enemy. *James v. 6. Ye have killed the just, and he doth not resist you.*

4. He desires that the core of the controversy might be searched into, and some proper method taken to bring it to an end, *ver. 19.* Saul himself could not say that justice put him on thus to persecute David, or that he was obliged to do it for the publick safety : David was not willing to say, (though it was very true) that Saul's own envy and malice put him on to do it ; and therefore he concludes it must be attributed either to the righteous judgment of God, or to the unrighteous designs of evil men. Now, 1. *If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, either in displeasure to me, taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, though, as to thee, I am guiltless : or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee, let him accept an offering from us both ; let us join in making our peace with God, and reconciling our selves to him, which may be done by sacrifice, and then I hope the sin will be pardoned whatever it is, and the trouble, which is so great a vexation both to thee and me, will come to an end. See the right method of peace-making ; let us first make God our friend by Christ, the great sacrifice, and then all other enmities shall be slain, Eph. ii. 16. Prov. xvi. 7.* But, 2. *If thou art put upon it by wicked men, that incense thee against me, cursed be they before the Lord, i. e. they are very ill people, and it is fit they should be abandoned as such, and excluded from the king's court and councils. He decently lays the blame upon the evil counsellors, who advised the king to that which was dishonourable and dishonest, and insists upon it that they be removed from about him, and forbidden his presence, as men cursed before the Lord, and then he hoped he should gain his petition, which is, ver. 20. Let not my blood fall to the earth, as thou threatnest, for it is before the face of the Lord, who will take cognizance of the wrong, and avenge it. Thus pathetically doth David plead with Saul for his life, and, in order to that, for his favourable opinion of him.*

21. ¶ Then said Saul, I have sinned : return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day : behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. 22. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear, and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. 23. The LORD render to every man his righteousness, and his faithfulness : for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORDS anointed. 24. And behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes ; so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. 25. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David : thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Here is, 1. Saul's penitent confession of his fault and folly in persecuting David, and his promise to do so no more. This second instance of David's respect to him, wrought more upon him than the former, and extorted from him better acknowledgments, *ver. 21.* 1. He owns himself melted and quite overcome, by David's kindness to him. *My soul was precious in thine eyes this day, which I thought had been odious.* 2. He acknowledges he had done very ill to persecute him : That he had therein acted against God's law, *I have sinned ;* and against his own interest, *I have played the fool, in pursuing him as an enemy who would have been one of my best friends, if I could but have thought so ; herein (saith he) I have erred exceedingly, and wronged both thee and my self. Note, Those that sin play the fool, and err exceedingly ; those especially that hate and persecute God's people, Job xix. 28.* 3. He invites him to court again, *Return, my son David.* Those that understand themselves, will see it their interest to have those about them that behave themselves wisely, as David did, and have God with them. 4. He promiseth him that he would not persecute him as he had done, but protect him. *I will no more do thee harm.* We have reason to think, according to the mind he was now in, he meant as

he said, and yet neither his confession, nor his promise of amendment, came from a principle of true repentance.

2. David's improvement of Saul's convictions and confessions, and the evidence he had to produce of his own sincerity. He desired that one of the footmen might fetch the spear, *ver. 22.* and then, *ver. 23.* 1. He appeals to God as Judge of the controversy. *The Lord render to every man his righteousness.* David, by faith, is sure he will do it, for he infallibly knows the true character of all persons and actions, and is inflexibly just, to render to every man according to his work ; and, by prayer, he desires he would do it, wherein he doth, in effect, pray against Saul, who had dealt unrighteously and unfaithfully with him, *Give them according to their deeds, Psal. xxviii.* 4. but principally intends it as a prayer for himself, that God would protect him in his righteousness and faithfulness, and reward him for it, since Saul so ill requited him. 2. He minds Saul again of the proof he had now given of his respect to him, from a principle of loyalty ; *I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed :* intimating to Saul, that the anointing oil was his protection, for which he was indebted to the Lord, and ought to express his gratitude to him ; had he been a common person, he would not have been so tender of him ; and, perhaps, with this further reach, Saul knew, or had reason to think, that David was the Lord's anointed too, and therefore, by the same rule, Saul ought to be as tender of David's life, as he had been of his. 3. Not relying much upon Saul's promises, he puts himself under God's protection, and begs his favour, *ver. 24. Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, how light soever thou makest of it.* Thus he takes God to be his paymaster for his kindness to Saul, which they may with a holy confidence do, that *do well and suffer for it.*

3. Saul's prediction of David's advancement. He commends him, *ver. 25. Blessed be thou, my son David.* So strong was the conviction Saul was now under of David's honesty, that he was not ashamed to condemn himself, and applaud David, even in the hearing of his own soldiers, who could not but blush to think, that they were come out so furiously against a man whom their master, when he meets, careleth thus. He foretels his victories, and his elevation at last. *Thou shalt do great things.* Note, Those who make conscience of doing that which is truly good, may come, by the divine assistance, to do that which is truly great. He adds, *Thou shalt also still prevail,* more and more, he means against himself, but was lothe to speak that out. The princely qualities which appeared in David, his generosity in sparing Saul, his military authority in reprimanding Abner for sleeping, his care of the publick good, and the signal tokens of God's presence with him, convinced Saul that he would certainly be advanced to the throne at last, according to the prophecies concerning him.

Lastly, A palliative cure being thus made of the wound, they parted friends. Saul returned to Gibeah, *re infecta,* ashamed of the expedition he had made ; but David could not take his word so far as to return with him. Those that have once been false, do not deserve to be trusted another time. Therefore *David went on his way.* And after this parting it doth not appear that ever Saul and David saw one another again.

C H A P. XXVII.

David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he had his faults, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but our admonition ; witness the story of this chapter, in which, though (1.) We find, to his praise, that he prudently took care of his own safety, and his family's, ver. 2,—4. and valiantly fought Israel's battles against the Canaanites, ver. 8, 9. Yet, (2.) We find, to his dishonour, 1. That he began to despair of his deliverance, ver. 1. 2. That he deserted his own country, and went to dwell in the land of the Philistines, ver. 1, 5,—7. 3. That he imposed upon Achish with an equivocation, if not a lie, concerning his expedition, ver. 10,—12.

1. **A**N D David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul : there is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel : so shall I escape out of his hand. 2. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him, unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he, and his men, every man with his household, even David, with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabals wife. 4. And it was told Saul, that David was fled to Gath : and he sought no more again for him. 5. ¶ And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there : for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? 6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day : wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah

dah unto this day, 7. And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines, was a full year and four months.

Here is, 1. The prevalency of David's fear, which was the effect of the weakness of his faith, *ver. 1. He said to his heart* (so it may be read) in his communings with it, concerning his present condition, *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.* He represented to himself the restless rage and malice of Saul, who could not be wrought into a reconciliation; the treachery of his own countrymen, witness that of the Ziphites once and again; he looked upon his own forces, and observed how few they were, and that no recruits had come in to him of a great while, nor could he perceive that he got any ground; and from hence in a melancholy mood, he draws this dark conclusion, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.* But, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?* Was he not anointed to be king? Did not that infer an assurance, that he should be preserved to the kingdom? Though he had no reason to trust Saul's promises, had he not all the reason in the world to trust the promises of God? His experience of the particular care providence took of him, ought to have encouraged him. He that has delivered, doth, and will: But unbelief is a sin that easily begets, even good men: When *without are fightings, within are fears,* and it is a hard matter to get over them. Lord, increase our faith.

2. The resolution he came to hereupon. Now Saul was for this time returned to his place, he determined to take this opportunity of retiring into the Philistines country. Consulting his own heart only, and not the ephod, or the prophet, he concludes, *There is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.* Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience, even of very good men. Now, 1. Saul was an enemy to himself and his kingdom, in driving him to this extremity. He weakened his own interest when he expelled from his service, and forced into the service of his enemies, so great a general as David was, and so brave a regiment as he had the command of. 2. David was no friend to himself in taking this course. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah, chap. xxii. 5. There God had wonderfully preserved him, and employed him sometimes for the good of his country, why then should he think of deserting his post? How could he expect the protection of the God of Israel, if he got out of the borders of the land of Israel? Can he expect to be safe among the Philistines, out of whose hands he had lately escaped so narrowly, by feigning himself mad? Will he receive obligations from those now, whom he knows when he comes to be king, he must not return kindness to, but be under an obligation to make war upon? He will hereby gratify his enemies, who bid him go serve other Gods, that they might have wherewith to reproach him; and will very much weaken the hands of his friends, who would not have wherewith to answer that reproach. See what need we have to pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

3. The kind reception he had at Gath; Achish bid him welcome, partly out of generosity, being proud of entertaining so brave a man; partly out of policy, hoping to engage him for ever to his service, and that his example would invite many more to desert, and come over to him. No doubt, he gave David a solemn promise of protection, which he could rely upon, when he could not trust Saul's promises: We may blush to think, that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, who, if an Israelite indeed, would be without guile. And that the city of Gath, should be a place of refuge for a good man, when the cities of Israel are made too hot for him. David, 1. Brought his men with him, *ver. 2.* that they might guard him, and might themselves be safe where he was: And to recommend himself the more to Achish, who hoped to have service out of him. 2. He brought his family with him: His *wives* and his *household*, so did all his *men*, *ver. 2, 3.* Masters of families ought to take care of those that are committed to them, to protect and provide for those of their own house, and to *dwell with them as men of knowledge.*

4. Saul's desisting from the further prosecution of him, *ver. 4.* *He sought no more again for him;* this intimates, that notwithstanding the professions of repentance he had lately made, if he had had David in his reach, he would have been at him again: But, because he dares not come where he is, he resolves to let him alone: Thus many seem to leave their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them if they could. Saul sought no more for him, contenting himself with his banishment, since he could no have his blood; and hoping, it may be (as he had done, *chap. xviii. 25.*) that he would sometime or other *fall by the hand of the Philistines:* and though he would rather have the pleasure of destroying him himself, yet if they do it, he will be satisfied, so that it may be done effectually.

5. David's removal from Gath to Ziklag.

1. David's request for leave to remove, was prudent and very modest, *ver. 5.* 1. It was really prudent. David knew what it was to be envied in the court of Saul, and had much more reason to fear in the court of Achish, and therefore declines preferment there, and wishes for a settlement in the country, where he might be private, more within himself, and less in other peoples way.

In a town of his own, he might have the more free exercise of his religion, and keep his men better to it, and not have his righteous soul vexed, as it was at Gath, with the idolatries of the Philistines. 2. As it was presented to Achish, it was very modest. He doth not prescribe to him what place he should assign him, only begs it might be in some town in the country, where he pleased, beggars must not be choosers: But gives this for a reason, *why should thy servant dwell in the royal city?* to crowd thee, and disoblige those about thee. Note, Those that would stand fast, must not covet to stand high; and humble souls aim not to dwell in royal cities.

2. The grant which Achish made him upon that request, was very generous and kind, *ver. 6, 7.* Achish gave him Ziklag. Hereby, 1. Israel recovered their ancient right: for Ziklag was in the lot of the tribe of Judah, *Josh. xv. 31.* and afterwards, out of that lot, was assigned, with some other cities, to Simeon, *Josh. xix. 5.* but either it was never subdued, or the Philistines had, in some struggle with Israel, made themselves masters of it: Perhaps, they had got it unjustly, and Achish being a man of sense and honour, took this occasion to restore it; *The righteous God judgeth righteously.* 2. David gained a commodious settlement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen, and whither they might resort to him upon the revolution that was now approaching. Though we do not find that he augmented his forces at all, while Saul lived (for *chap. xxx. 10.* he had but his *six hundred men*) yet immediately after Saul's death, that was the rendezvous of his friends: Nay, it should seem, that while he kept himself close, because of Saul, multitudes resorted to him, at least, to assure him of their sincere intentions, *1 Chron. xii. 1.—22.* And this further advantage David gained, that Ziklag was annexed to the crown, at least the royalty of it pertained to the kings of Judah ever after, *ver. 6.* Note, There is nothing lost by humility and modesty, and a willingness to retire. Real advantages follow those that flee from imaginary honours. Here David continued for some days, even four months, as it may very well be read, *ver. 7:* or some Days above four months. The seventy read it, only some months, so long he waited for the set time of his accession to the throne: for *he that believeth will not make haste.*

8. ¶ And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. 9. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. 10. And Achish said, whither have ye made a rode to day? And David said, against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. 11. And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, lest they should tell on us, saying, so did David, and so *will be* his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

Here is an account of David's actions, while he was in the land of the Philistines; a fierce attack he made upon some remains of the devoted nations, his success in it, and the representation he gave of it to Achish.

1. We may excuse him from injustice and cruelty in this action, because these people whom he cut off, were such as heaven had long since doomed to destruction, and he that did it, was one whom heaven had ordained to dominion; so that the thing was very fit to be done, and he was very fit to do it. It was not for him that was anointed to fight the Lord's battles, to sit still in sloth, however he thought fit in modesty to retire. He desired to be safe from Saul only, that he might expose himself for Israel, he avenged an old quarrel, that God had with these nations, and at the same time fetched in provisions for himself and his army, for by their swords they must live. The Amalekites were to be all cut off, probably the Geshurites and Gezrites were branches of Amalek; Saul was rejected for sparing them, David makes up the deficiency of his obedience before he succeeds him. He smote them, and *left none alive*, *ver. 8, 9.* The service paid it self, for they carried off abundance of spoil, which served for the subsistence of David's forces.

2. Yet we cannot excuse him from dissimulation with Achish, in the account he gave him of this expedition.

(1.) It seems David was not willing he should know the truth, and therefore spared none to carry tidings to Gath, *ver. 11.* not because he was ashamed of what he had done as an ill thing, but because he was afraid, if the Philistines knew it, they would be apprehensive of danger to themselves or their allies, by harbouring him among them, and would expel him their coasts. It would be easy to conclude, if *so he did, so will be his manner,* and therefore

fore he industriously conceals it from them, which it seems he could do, by putting them all to the sword, for none of their neighbours would inform against him, nor, perhaps, would soon come to the knowledge of what was done. Intelligence not being so readily communicated then as now.

(2.) He hid it from Achish, with an equivocation, not at all becoming his character. Being asked which way he had made his fall, he answered *against the south of Judah*, ver. 10. It was true, he had invaded those countries that lay south of Judah, but he made Achish believe he had invaded those that lay south in Judah, the Ziphites suppose, that had once and again betrayed him; so Achish understood him, and from thence inferred, that he *had made his people Israel to abhor him*, and so riveted himself in the interest of Achish. The fidelity of Achish to him, his good opinion of him, and the confidence he put in him, aggravate his sin in deceiving him thus. Which, with some other such instances, David seems penitently to reflect upon, when he prays, *remove from me the way of lying*.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Preparations are here in making for that war, which will put an end to the life and reign of Saul, and so make way for David to the throne. In this war, (1.) The Philistines are the aggressors, and Achish their king makes David his confident, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The Israelites prepare to receive them, and Saul their king makes the devil his privy-counsellor, and thereby fills the measure of his iniquity. Observe, (1.) The despairing condition which Saul was in, ver. 3.—6. (2.) The application he made to a witch, to bring him up Samuel, ver. 7,—14, (3.) His discourse with the apparition, ver. 15,—19. (4.) The damp it struck upon him, ver. 21.—26.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel: and Achish said unto David, know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2. And David said to Achish, surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. 3. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city: and Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. 6. And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Here is, 1. The design of the Philistines against Israel; they resolved to *fight them*, ver. 1. If the Israelites had not forsaken God, there had been no Philistines remaining to molest them; if Saul had not forsaken him, they had by this time been put out of all danger by them. The Philistines took an opportunity to make this attempt, when they had David among them, whom they feared more than Saul and all his forces.

2. The expectation Achish had of assistance from David in this war, and the encouragement David gave him to expect it. *Thou shalt go with me to battle*, saith Achish, if I protect thee, I may demand service from thee; and he will think himself happy, if he may have such a man as David on his side, who prospered whithersoever he went. David gives him an ambiguous answer, we will see what will be done, it will be time enough to talk of that hereafter, but *surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do*, ver. 2. i. e. I will consider in what post I may be best able to serve thee, if thou wilt but give me leave to choose it. Thus he keeps himself free from a promise to serve him, and yet keeps up his expectation of it. For Achish took it in no other sense, but as an engagement to assist him, and promised him thereupon, that he would make him captain of the guards, protector, or prime minister of state.

3. The drawing of the armies on both sides into the field, ver. 4. *The Philistines pitched in Shunem*, which was in the tribe of Issachar, a great way north from their country. It seems the land of Israel was ill guarded, when the Philistines could march their army into the very heart of the country. Saul, while he pursued David, left his people naked and exposed. On some of the adjacent mountains of Gilboa, Saul musters his forces, and prepares to engage the Philistines, which he had little heart to, now the *spirit of the Lord was departed from him*.

4. The terror Saul was in, and the loss he was at upon this occasion. He *saw the host of the Philistines*, and by his own view of them, and the intelligence his spies brought him, he perceived they were more numerous, better armed, and in better heart than his own were, which made him afraid, so that *his heart greatly trem-*

bled, ver. 5. Had he kept close to God, he needed not have been afraid at the sight of an army of Philistines, but now he had provoked God to forsake him, his interest failed, his armies dwindled, and looked mean, and, which was worse, his spirits failed him, his heart sunk within him. A guilty conscience made him tremble at the shaking of a leaf: now he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests, which he had spilt, his sins are set in order before his eyes, and put him into confusion, ruffle all his counsels, rob him of all his courage, and possess him with a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Note, Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience. In this distress *Saul enquired of the Lord*, ver. 6. Need drives those to God that in the day of their prosperity slighted his oracles and altars: *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*, Isa. xxvi. 16. Did ever any seek the Lord and miss of finding him? Yes, Saul did; *the Lord answered him not*, took no notice either of his petitions or of his enquiries; gave him no directions what to do, nor any encouragement to hope that he would be with him; *Should he be enquired of at all, by such a one as Saul?* Ezek. xiv. 3. No, he could not expect an answer of peace, for, (1.) He enquired in such a manner, that it was as if he had *not enquired at all*. Therefore it is said, 1 Chron. x. 14. *He enquired not of the Lord*, for he did it faintly, and coldly, and with a secret design, if God did not answer him, to consult the devil. He did not enquire of faith, but with a double unstable mind. (2.) He enquired of the Lord when it was too late, when the days of his probation were over, and he was finally rejected. *Seek the Lord while he may be found*, for there is a time when he will not be found. (3.) He had forfeited the benefit of all the methods of enquiry. Could he that hated and persecuted Samuel and David, who were both prophets, expect to be answered by prophets? Or he that had slain the high priest, to be answered by Urim? Or he that had sinned away the spirit of grace, to be answered by dreams? No, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*.

5. The mention of some things, that had happened a good while ago, to introduce the following story, ver. 3. (1.) The death of Samuel. Samuel was dead, which made the Philistines more bold, and Saul the more afraid, for had Samuel been alive, he thought his presence and countenance, his good advice, and good prayers would have stood him in stead, in his distress. (2.) Saul's edict against witchcraft. He had put the laws in execution against *those that had familiar spirits*, who must not be *suffered to live*, Exod. xxii. 18. Some think he did this in the beginning of his reign, while he was under Samuel's influence; others think it was lately done, for it is spoken of here, ver. 9. as a late edict. Perhaps, when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit, he suspected that he was bewitched, and, for that reason, cut off all that had familiar spirits. Many seem zealous against sin, when they themselves are any way hurt by it, that will inform against swearers if they swear at them, or against drunkards if in their drink they abuse them, who, otherwise, have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. However it was commendable in Saul, thus to use his power for the terror and restraint of these evil doers. Note, Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul will drive the devil out of his kingdom, and yet harbour him in his heart, by envy and malice.

7. ¶ Then said Saul unto his servants, seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. 8. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee. 9. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10. And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As the LORD liveth*, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11. Then said the woman, whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, bring me up Samuel. 12. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: And the woman spake to Saul, saying, why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul. 13. And the king said unto her, be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14. And he said unto her, what form *is* he of? And she said, an old man cometh up, and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Here, 1. Saul hearkens out a witch, ver. 7. When God *answered him not*, if he had humbled himself by repentance, and per-

fevered in seeking God, who knows, but that at length, he might have been intreated for him; but since he can discern no comfort, either from heaven or earth, (*Iſa. viii. 21, 22.*) he resolves to knock at the gates of hell, and to see if any there will befriend him, and give him advice: *Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit,* ver. 7. And his servants were too officious to serve him in this ill thing, they presently recommended one to him at Endor (a city not far off) who had escaped the execution of Saul's edict: to her he resolves to apply himself. Herein he is chargeable, 1. With contempt of the God of Israel; as if any creature could do him a kindness when God had left him, and frowned upon him. 2. With contradiction to himself. He knew the heinousness of the sin of witchcraft, else he would not have cut off those that had familiar spirits; yet now he has recourse to that as an oracle, which he had before condemned as an abomination. It is common for men to inveigh severely against those sins which they are in no temptation to, but afterwards themselves to be overcome by them. Had one told Saul when he was destroying the witches, that he himself would ere long consult with one, he would have said, as Hazael did, *What? Is thy servant a dog?* But who knows what mischiefs they will run into that forsake God, and are forsaken of him?

2. Hearing of one, he hastens to her, but goes by night, and in disguise, only with two servants, and, probably, on foot, ver. 8. See how those that are led captive by Satan are forced, 1. To disparage themselves. Never did Saul look so mean, as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune. 2. To dissemble themselves. Evil works are works of darkness, and they hate the light, neither care for coming to it. Saul went to the witch incognito, not in his robes, but in the habit of a common soldier, not only left the witch her self, if she had known him, should have declined to serve him, either for fear he came to trapan her, or to be revenged on him for his edict against those of her profession, but lest his own people should know it, and abhor him for it. Such is the power of natural conscience, that even those who do evil, blush and are ashamed to do it.

3. He tells her his errand, and promiseth her impunity. 1. All he desires of her, is to bring him up one from the dead, whom he had a mind to discourse with. It was necromancy, or divination by the dead, that he hoped to serve his purpose by; this was expressly forbidden by the law, *Deut. xviii. 11.* seeking for the living to the dead, *Iſa. viii. 19.* *Bring me up him whom I shall name,* ver. 8. This supposeth it as generally taken for granted, that souls exist after death, and that when men die there is not an end of them: That separate souls have great knowledge; but to think that any good souls should come up at the beck of an evil spirit, or that God, who had denied a man the benefit of his own institutions, should suffer him to reap any real advantage by a cursed diabolical invention, was very absurd. 2. She signifies her fear of the law, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare, ver. 9. *Thou knowest what Saul has done.* Providence ordered it so, that Saul should be told to his face of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her rates, for though mention be not made of her fee, no doubt she demanded and had a large one. Observe, how sensible she is of danger by the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against the danger of that; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations of God's law, and the terrors of his wrath. She considers what Saul had done, not what God had done, against such practices, and fears a snare laid for her life, more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men, than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promiseth with an oath not to betray her, ver. 10. It was his duty as a king to punish her, and he knew it, yet he swears not to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from that, which by the divine command he was bound to. But he promised more than he could perform, when he said, *There shall no punishment happen to thee,* for he that could not secure himself, much less could secure her, from divine vengeance.

4. Samuel, who was lately dead, is the person whom Saul desired to have some talk with, and the witch, with her enchantments, gratifies his desire, and brings them together.

1. As soon as Saul had given the witch the assurance she desired, that he would not discover her, she applied herself to her witchcrafts, and asked very confidently, *Whom shall I bring up to thee?* ver. 11. Note, Hopes of impunity embolden sinners in their evil ways, and harden their hearts.

2. Saul desires to speak with Samuel. *Bring me up Samuel.* Samuel had anointed him to the kingdom, and had formerly been his faithful friend and counsellor, and therefore with him he wished to advise. While Samuel was living at Ramah, not far from Gibeah of Saul, and presided there in the school of the prophets, we never read of Saul's going to him to advise with him, in any of the difficulties he was in, it had been well for him if he had; then he slighted him, and, perhaps, hated him, looking upon him to be in David's interest: but now he is dead, O for Samuel again! By all means, *Bring me up Samuel.* Note, Many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when they are living, would be glad to have them again when they are gone. *Send Lazarus to me, and send Lazarus to my father's house,* Luke xvi. 24,—27. The sepulchres of the righteous are garnished.

3. Here is a seeming defect or chasm in the story; Saul said, *Bring me up Samuel,* and the very next words are, *When the woman saw Samuel,* ver. 12. Whereas one would have expected to be told how she performed the operation, what spells and charms she used, or that some little intimation should be given of what she said or did: but the profound silence of the scripture concerning it, speaks to us not to covet to know the depths of Satan, Rev. ii. 24. nor to have our curiosity gratified with any accounts of the mysteries of iniquity. It has been said of the books of some of the Popish confessors, that, by their descriptions of sin, they have taught men to commit it; but the scripture conceals sinful art, that we may be simple concerning evil, Rom. xvi. 19.

4. The witch, upon sight of the apparition, was aware that her client was Saul, her familiar spirit, it is likely, informing her of it, ver. 12. *Why hast thou deceived me with a disguise?* for thou art Saul, the very man that I am afraid of above any man: thus she gave Saul to understand the power of her art, in that she could discover him through his disguise; and yet she feared lest hereafter, at least, he should take advantage against her for what she was now doing. Had she believed that it was really Samuel whom she saw, she would have had more reason to be afraid of him, who was a good prophet, than of Saul, who was a wicked king. But the wrath of earthly princes is feared by most, more than the wrath of the King of kings.

5. Saul (who, we may suppose, was kept at a distance in the next room) bid her not be afraid of him, but go on with the operation, and enquired *what she saw?* ver. 13. O, faith the woman, *I saw gods ascending out of the earth,* i. e. a spirit: they called angels gods, because spiritual beings. Poor gods that ascend out of the earth, but she speaks the language of the heathen, who had their infernal deities, and had them in veneration. If Saul had thought it necessary to his conversation with Samuel, that the body of Samuel should be called out of the grave, he would have taken the witch with him to Ramah, where his sepulchre was: but the design was wholly upon his soul, which yet, if it became visible, it was expected would appear in the usual resemblance of the body: and God permitted the devil to answer the design, to put on Samuel's shape, that they who would not receive the love of the truth might be given up to strong delusions, and believe a lie. That it could not be the soul of Samuel himself they might easily apprehend, when it ascended out of the earth, for the spirit of a man, much more of a good man, goes upward, Eccl. iii. 21. But if people will be deceived, it is just with God to say, let them be deceived. That the devil, by the divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel, is not strange, since he can transform himself into an angel of light: nor is it strange he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion; that Saul might be driven to despair, by enquiring of the devil, who would not, in a right manner, enquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort. Saul being told of gods ascending, was eager to know what was the form of this deity, and in what shape he appeared; so far was he from conceiving any horror at it, his heart being wretchedly hardened, by the deceitfulness of sin. Saul, it seems, was not permitted to see any manner of similitude himself, but he must take the woman's word for it, that she saw an old man, covered with a mantle or robe, the habit of a judge, which Samuel had sometimes worn, and, some think, it was for the sake of that, and the majesty of its aspect, that she called this apparition Elohim, a god, or gods: for so magistrates are stiled, *Pſalm lxxxii. 1.*

6. Saul perceiving, by the woman's description, that it was Samuel, stooped with his face to the ground, either, as it is generally taken, in reverence to Samuel, though he saw him not, or, perhaps, to listen to that soft and muttering voice which he now expected to hear; for they that had familiar spirits, peeped and muttered, *Iſa. viii. 19.* and, it should seem, Saul bowed himself (probably, by the witch's direction) that he might hear what was whispered, and listen carefully to it: for the voice of one that has a familiar spirit, is said to come out of the ground, and to whisper out of the dust, *Iſa. xxix. 4.* He would stoop to that, who would not stoop to the word of God.

15. ¶ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am fore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 17. And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: 18. Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 19. Moreover, the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee, into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also

also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

We have here the conference between Saul and Satan: Saul came in disguise, *ver. 8.* but Satan soon discovered him, *ver. 12.* Satan comes in disguise, in the disguise of Samuel's mantle, and Saul cannot discover him. Such is the disadvantage we labour under in wrestling with the rulers of the darkness of this world, that they know us, while we are ignorant of their wiles and devices.

1. The spectre or apparition asks why he is sent for; and performing Samuel, he humours the thing well enough, *ver. 15.* *Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?* To us now this discovers that it was an evil spirit that personated Samuel, for (as bishop Patrick observes) it is not in the power of witches to disturb the rest of good men, and to bring them back into the world when they please, nor would the true Samuel have acknowledged such a power in magical arts, but to Saul this was a proper device of Satan's to draw veneration from him, to possess him with an opinion of the power of divination, and so to rivet him in the devil's interests.

2. Saul makes his complaint to this counterfeit Samuel, mistaking him for the true, and a most doleful complaint it is, *I am sore distressed,* and know not what to do, *for the Philistines make war against me;* yet I should do well enough with them if I had but the tokens of God's presence with me; but, alas, *God is departed from me.* He complained not of God's withdrawals till he fell into trouble, till the *Philistines made war against him,* and then he begins to lament God's departure. He that in his prosperity enquired not after God, in his adversity thought it hard that God answered him not, nor took any notice of his enquiries, either by dreams or prophets, he neither gave answers immediately himself, nor sent them by any of his messengers. He doth not, like a penitent, own the righteousness of God in this, but, like a man enraged, flies out against God as unkind, and flies off from him; *therefore I have called thee:* as if Samuel, a servant of God, would favour those whom God frowned upon; or, as if a dead prophet could do him more service than the living ones. One would think, by this, that he really desired to meet with the devil, and expected no other, (though under the covert of Samuel's name) for he desires advice otherwise than from God, therefore from the devil, that is a rival with God. God denies me, *therefore I come to thee.* *Flectere si nequeo, superos Acheronte movebo.*

3. It is cold comfort which this evil spirit, in Samuel's mantle, gives to Saul, and is manifestly intended to drive him to despair, and self-murder. Had it been the true Samuel, when Saul desired to be told what he should do, he would have bid him repent, and make his peace with God, and recal David from his banishment, and would then have told him, that he might hope in this way to find mercy with God; but, instead of that, he represents his case as helpless and hopeless, serving him as he did Judas, to whom he was first a tempter, and then a tormentor, persuading him first to sell his master, and then to hang himself.

1. He upbraids him with his present distress, *ver. 16.* tells him, not only that God was departed from him, but that he was become his enemy, and therefore he must expect no comfortable answer from him; *Wherefore dost thou ask me?* How can I be thy friend, when God is thine enemy? Or thy counsellor, when he has left thee?

2. He upbraids him with the anointing of David to the kingdom, *ver. 17.* He could not have touched upon a string that sounded more unpleasant than this to Saul. Nothing is said to reconcile him to David, but all tends rather to exasperate him against David, and to widen the breach. Yet, to make him believe that he was Samuel, he saith, it was what God spake by him. The devil knows how to speak with an air of religion, and can teach *false apostles to transform themselves into the apostles of Christ,* and imitate their language. Those who use spells and charms, and plead in defence of them, that they find nothing in them but what is good, may remember what good words the devil here spoke, and yet with what a malicious design.

3. He upbraids him with his disobedience to the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, *ver. 18.* Satan had helped him to palliate and excuse that sin, when Samuel was dealing with him to bring him to repentance, but now he aggravates it, to make him despair of God's mercy. See what they get that hearken to Satan's temptations, he himself will be their accuser, and insult over them. And see whom they resemble that allure others to that which is evil, and reproach them for it when they have done.

4. He foretells his approaching ruin, *ver. 19.* 1. That his army should be routed by the Philistines. This is twice mentioned. *The Lord shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines.* This he might foresee, by considering the superior strength and number of the Philistines, the weakness of the armies of Israel, Saul's timorousness, and especially God's departure from them. Yet to personate a prophet, he very gravely ascribes it once and again to God, the Lord shall do it. 2. That he and his sons should be slain in the battle. *To-morrow,* that is, in a little time, (and supposing that it was now after midnight, I see not but it may be taken strictly, for the very next day after that which was now begun) *thou and thy sons shall be with me,* i. e. in the state of the dead, separate from the body. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have fore-

told it, unless God had revealed it to him; and though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretell it; as we read of an evil spirit that foresaw Ahab's fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and was instrumental in it, *1 Kings xxii. 20.* as perhaps this evil spirit here was in Saul's destruction, by the divine permission. That evil spirit flattered Ahab, this frightened Saul, and both that they might fall; so miserable are they that are under the power of Satan, for *whether he rage or laugh there is no rest;* allude to, *Prov. xxix. 9.*

20. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel, and there was no strength in him: for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. 21. And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. 22. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way. 23. But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him, and he hearkened unto their voice: so he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24. And the woman had a fat calf in the house, and she hastened and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof. 25. And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants, and they did eat: then they rose up, and went away that night.

We are here told how Saul received this terrible message from the ghost he consulted. He desired to be told *what he should do,* *ver. 15.* but is only told what he had done, and what should be done to him. Those that expect any good counsel or comfort otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul here was. Observe,

1. How he sunk under the load, *ver. 20.* he was indeed unfit to bear it, having *eaten nothing all the day before, nor that night:* he came fasting from the camp, and continued fasting; not for want of food, but for want of a stomach. The fear he was in of the power of the Philistines, *ver. 5.* took away his appetite, or, perhaps, the struggle he had with his own conscience, after he had entertained the thought of consulting the witch, made him to nauseate even his necessary food, though never so dainty. This made him an easy prey to this fresh terror that now came upon him like an armed man. *He fell all along on the earth,* as if the archers of the Philistines had already hit him, *and there was no strength in him,* to bear up against these heavy tidings. Now he had enough of consulting witches, and found them miserable comforters. When God, in his word, speaks terror to sinners, at the same time he opens to them a door of hope if they repent. But they that apply themselves to the gates of hell for succour, must there expect darkness without any glimpse of light.

2. With what difficulty he was persuaded to take so much relief as was necessary to carry him back to his post in the camp. The witch, it should seem, had left Saul alone with the spectre, to have his talk with him by himself, but, perhaps, hearing him fall and groan, and perceiving him to be in a mighty agony, she came to him, *ver. 21.* and was mighty importunate with him to take some refreshment, that he might be able to get clear from her house, fearing, that if he should be sick, especially if he should die there, she should be punished for it as a traitor, though she had escaped punishment as a witch. It is probable this made her so solicitous to help him, rather than any affection to him. But what a deplorable condition had he brought himself to, when he needed so wretched a comforter!

1. She shews herself very importunate with him to take some refreshment, pleads, *ver. 21.* that she had obeyed his voice, to the endangering of her life, and therefore, why should not he hearken to her voice, for the relieving of his life, *ver. 22.* She had a fat calf at hand (and the word signifies one that was made use of in treading out the corn, and therefore could the worse be spared) this she prepares for his entertainment, *ver. 20.* Josephus is large in applauding the extraordinary courtesy and liberality of this woman; and recommending it for an example of compassion to the distressed, and readiness to communicate for their relief, though we have no prospect of being recompensed for it.

2. He shewed himself very averse to it. *He refused, and said, I will not eat,* *ver. 23.* chusing rather to die obscurely by famine, than honourably by the sword. Had he laboured only under a defect of animal spirits, food might help him, but, alas, his case was out of the reach of such succours. What are dainty meats to a wounded conscience? *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart;* so disagreeable and unwelcome.

3. The woman, at length, with the help of his servants overpersuaded him against his inclination, and resolutions, to take some refreshment.

refreshment. Not by force, but by friendly advice they *compelled him*, ver. 23. and of no other but such a rational and courteous compulsion, are we to understand that in the parable. *Compel them to come in*, Luke xiv. 23. *How forcible are right words*, when men are pressed by them, to that, which is for their own interest, Job. vi. 25. Somewhat that revived Saul was with this entertainment, so that he and his servants, when they had eaten, *rose up and went away* before it was light, ver. 25. that they might hasten to their business, and that they might not be seen to come out of such a scandalous house. Josephus here, much admires the bravery and magnanimity of Saul, that, though he was assured he should lose both his life and honour, yet he would not desert his army, but resolutely returned to the camp, and stood ready for an engagement. I more admire the hardness of his heart, that he did not again apply himself to God by repentance and prayer, in hopes yet to obtain at least a reprieve; but he desperately run head-long upon his own ruin: And, perhaps, now wrath and envy were come upon him to the uttermost, he was the better reconciled to his hard fate, now he was told that his sons, and Jonathan among the rest, whom he hated for his affection to David, should die with him. If he must fall, he cared not what desolations of his family, and kingdom accompanied his fall, hoping it would be the worse for his successor. *ἐπεὶ δὲ δαυὶδ ὁ γαῖα μυχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτὸν*. He begged not as David, let thy hand be against me, but not against thy people.

C H A P. XXIX.

How Saul, who was forsaken of God, when he was in a strait, was more and more perplexed and embarrassed with his own counsels, we read in the foregoing chapter: In this chapter we find, how David, who kept close to God, when he was in a strait, was extricated and brought off by the providence of God, without any contrivance of his own. We have him, (1.) Marching with the Philistines, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Excepted against by the Lords of the Philistines, ver. 3.—5. (3.) Happily dismissed by Achish, from that service, which did so ill become him, and which yet he knew not how to decline, ver. 6.—11.

1. **N**OW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. 2. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish. 3. Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? and Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me, unto this day? 4. And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him, and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? 5. Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

Here is, 1. The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of his asking advice from God, nor any project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, ver. 1. Achish who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself, and bring the forces he had into his service. David came accordingly, and upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rere, ver. 2. Now, 1. If when the armies engaged he should retire, and quit his post, he would fall under the indelible reproach, not only of cowardise, and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor, and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an ill thing as this, he could by no means persuade himself to do. 2. If he should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God, and a traitor to his country, would make his own people hate him, and unanimously oppose his coming to the crown, as unworthy the name of an Israelite, much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, who had fought against them, under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was in this engagement) the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him; so that on each side there seemed to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was, to a good man, greater to see sin before him, than to see trouble. Into this strait he brought himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting

the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised: Those that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, it is strange if they come off without guilt or grief, or both. What he himself purposed to do, doth not appear: Perhaps, he designed to act only as keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him, chap. xxviii. 2. and not to do any thing offensively against Israel: But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin, and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because, his heart was upright with him, he would not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but, with the temptation, made a way for him to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

2. A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait: God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines, to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed: And thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness. (1.) It was a proper question which they asked upon the mustering of the forces, *what do these Hebrews here?* ver. 3. What confidence can we put in them? Or what service can we expect from them? *A Hebrew is out of his place*, and if he have the spirit of a Hebrew, is out of his element, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be baited there. David used to hate the congregation of evil doers, however, he came now to be among them, Psal. xxvi. 5. (2.) It was an honourable testimony which Achish on this occasion gave to David. He looked upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongful persecution in his own country, and had put himself under his protection, whom therefore he was obliged in justice to secure, and thought he might in prudence employ him, for (saith he) he has been with me these days, or these years, i. e. a considerable time, many days at his court, and a year or two in his country, and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think any other but that he was heartily come over to him. By this, it appears, that David had carried himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people. We have need to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked is before us, and to be upon the reserve. (3.) Yet the princes are peremptory in it, that he must be sent home; and they give good reason for their insisting on it. 1. Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; witness, the ditty that was sung in honour of his triumphs over them, *Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands*, ver. 5. It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so noted a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought he should now act heartily against Saul, who then acted so vigorously with him, and for him. Who would be fond of popular praise and applause, when, even that, may another time be turned against a man to his reproach? 2. Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief than all Saul's Army could, ver. 4. He may in the battle be an adversary to us, and surprize us with an attack in the rere, while the army chargeth us in the front, and we have reason to think he will do so, that by betraying us he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man, who besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us? It is dangerous putting confidence in a reconciled enemy.

6. ¶ Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out, and thy coming in with me in the host, is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee, since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless, the lords favour thee not; 7. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines. 8. ¶ And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? 9. And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. 10. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning, with thy masters servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. 11. So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

If the reasons Achish had to trust David, were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered, why they should distrust him, (as I do not see that in polling they were, for the princes were certainly in the right) yet Achish was but one of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king, and in a council of war, held on this occasion, he was over-voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

1. The discharge Achish gives him is very honourable, and not a final discharge, but only from the present service. (1.) He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him, and in his conversation. *Thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God,* ver. 10. Wife and good men will gain respect wherever they go, from all that know how to make a right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish saith of David, God, by the prophet, saith of *the house of David*, (*Zech. xii. 8.*) that it shall be *as the angel of the Lord*: But this here is a court complement; that there is a divine promise. (2.) He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, ver. 6. It is very full, and in obliging terms, *thou hast been upright*, and thy whole carriage has been *good in my sight*, and *I have not found evil in thee*; Saul would not have given him such an approbation, to whom he had done far more service than to Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so inoffensively, as, if possible, to get the good word of all they have dealings with. And it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well, to give them the praise of it. (3.) He lays all the blame of his dismissal upon the princes, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand, *but the lords favour thee not*, and we must not disoblige them, nor can we oppose them, therefore *return and go in peace*. He had better part with his favourite, than occasion a disgust among his generals, and a mutiny in his army. He intimates a reason why they were uneasy at him, not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls *his masters servants*, viz. Saul's, ver. 10. they could trust him, but not them. (4.) He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light, ver. 10. to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

2. His reception of this discourse is very complimentary, I doubt not without some degree of dissimulation. What? (saith David) must I leave *my lord the king*, whom I am bound by office to protect, just now when he is going to expose himself in the field; why may not I go *fight against the enemies of my lord the king*, ver. 8. seeming fond to serve him, when he was, at this juncture, really fond to leave him, but he was not willing Achish should know that he was. None knows how strong the temptation is to compliment and dissemble, which they are in that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

3. God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him: For, besides that, the snare was broke, and he was delivered out of the dilemma, to which he was reduced, it proved a happy hastning of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him, proved more ways than one an advantage to him. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way*. What he doth with us we know not now, but we shall know hereafter, and shall see it was all for good.

C H A P. XXX.

When David was dismissed from the army of the Philistines, he did not go over to the camp of Israel, but being expelled by Saul observed an exact neutrality, and silently retired to his own city Ziklag, leaving the armies ready to engage. Now here we are told, (1.) *What a melancholy posture he found the city in, all laid waste by the Amalekites, and what distress he and his men were in upon it*, ver. 1.—6. (2.) *What course he took to recover what he had lost*. He enquired of God, and took out a commission from him, ver. 7, 8. pursued the enemy, ver. 9, 10. gained intelligence from a straggler, ver. 11.—15. Attacked and routed the rapparees, ver. 16, 17. and recovered all that they had carried off, ver. 18.—20. (3.) *What method he observed in the distribution of the spoil*, ver. 21, —31.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burnt it with fire: 2. And had taken the women captives, that were therein; they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. 3. So David and his men came to the city, and behold it was burnt with fire, and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. 4. Then David and the people that were with him, lift up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. 6. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons, and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Here is, 1. The descent which the Amalekites made upon Ziklag, in David's absence, and the desolations they made there. They

surprized the city when it was left unguarded, plundered it, burnt it, and carried all the women and children captives, ver. 1, 2. They intended by this, to revenge the like havock that David had lately made of them and their country, chap. xxvii. 8. He that had made so many enemies, ought not to have left his own concerns so naked and defenceless. They that make bold with others, must expect that others will make as bold with them, and provide accordingly. Now observe in this, 1. The cruelty of Saul's pity (as it proved) in sparing the Amalekites; if he had utterly destroyed them, as he ought to have done, these had not been in being to do this mischief. 2. How David was corrected for being so forward to go with the Philistines against Israel. God shewed him that he had better have staid at home, and looked after his own business. When we go abroad in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise. 3. How wonderfully God inclined the hearts of these Amalekites to carry the women and children away captives, and not to kill them. When David invaded them, he put all to the sword, chap. xxvii. 9. and no reason can be given why they did not return it upon his city, but that God restrained them; for he has all hearts in his hands, and saith to the fury of the most cruel men, *hitherto it shall come and no further*. Whether they spared them, to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or use them for slaves, God's hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, not for the destruction of the house of David.

2. The mighty confusion and consternation that David and his men were in, when they found their houses in ashes, and their wives and children gone into captivity. Three days march they had from the camp of the Philistines hence to Ziklag, and now they came thither weary, hoping to find rest in their houses, and joy in their families, behold a black and dismal scene is presented to them, ver. 3. which set them all a weeping, (David himself not excepted) though they were men of war, *till they had no more power to weep*, ver. 4. The mention of David's wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and their being carried captive, intimates, that that went nearer his heart than any thing else. Note, It is no disparagement to the boldest bravest spirits, to lament the calamities of relations and friends. Observe, 1. This trouble came upon them when they were absent. It was the ancient policy of Amalek to take Israel at an advantage. 2. It met them at their return, and, for ought appears, their own eyes gave them the first intelligence of it. Note, When we go abroad, we cannot foresee what evil tidings may meet us when we come home again. The going out may be very cheerful, and yet the coming in be very doleful. *Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow*, nor of to-night neither, *for thou knowest not what a day, or a piece of a day may bring forth*, Prov. xxvii. 1. If when we come off a journey, we find our tabernacles in peace, and not laid waste, as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it.

3. The mutiny and murmuring of David's men against him, ver. 6. *David was greatly distressed*, for in the midst of all his losses, his own people spake of stoning him, 1. Because they looked upon him as the occasion of their calamities, by the provocation he had given the Amalekites, and his indiscretion in leaving Ziklag without a garrison in it. Thus apt are we when we are in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are any way the occasion of our trouble, while we overlook the divine providence, and have not that regard to the operations of God's hand in it, which would silence our passions, and make us patient. 2. Because, now they began to despair of that preferment, which they promised themselves in following David. They hoped ere this to have been all princes, and now to find themselves all beggars, was such a disappointment to them, as made them grow outrageous, and threaten the life of him, on whom under God they had the greatest dependence. What absurdities will not ungoverned passions run men into; this was a sore trial to the man after God's own heart, and could not but go very near him. Saul had driven him his country, the Philistines had driven him their camp, the Amalekites had plundered his city, his wives were taken prisoners, and now to compleat his woe, his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, whom he had sheltered, and that did eat of his bread, instead of sympathizing with him, and offering him any relief, *lift up the heel against him*, and threatened to stone him. Great faith must expect such severe exercises. But it is observable, David was reduced to this extremity just before his accession to the throne, at this very time, perhaps, the stroke was struck, which opened the door to his advancement. Things are sometimes at the worst with the church and people of God just before they begin to mend.

4. David's pious dependence upon the divine providence and grace in this distress: *But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God*. 1. His men fretted at their loss, *the soul of the people was bitter*, so the word is, their own discontent and impatience added *wormwood and gall* to the affliction and misery, and made it doubly grievous: But David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it, for they gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces on work, and by encouraging himself in God, while they discouraged themselves, he kept his spirit calm and sedate. Or, 2. It is supposed to the threatening words his men gave out against him, they *spake of stoning him*, but he not offering to avenge the affront,

affront, nor terrified by their menaces, *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*; believed and considered with application to his present case, the power and providence of God, his justice and goodness, the method he commonly takes of bringing low, and then raising up, his care of his people that serve him, and trust in him, and the particular promises he had made to him, of bringing him safe to the throne, and with these considerations, supported himself, not doubting, but the present trouble would end well. Note, Those that have taken the Lord for their God, may take encouragement from their relation to him in the worst of times. It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever happens, to encourage themselves in God as the Lord, and their God, assuring themselves, that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble, and good out of evil, to all that love him, and are *the called according to his purpose*, Psalm xxvii. 13, 14. It was David's practice, and he had the comfort of it; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*. When he was at his wits end, he was not at his faith's end.

7. And David said unto Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod: and Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. 8. And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. 9. So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind, stayed. 10. But David pursued, he and four hundred men; (for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint, that they could not go over the brook Besor.) 11. ¶ And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat, and they made him drink water. 12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days, and three nights. 13. And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. 14. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb, and we burnt Ziklag with fire. 15. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. 16. ¶ And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. 17. And David smote them from the twilight, even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. 18. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. 19. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. 20. And David took all the flocks, and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.

Solomon observes, that *the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead*; that *the just falleth seven times a day, and riseth again*; so it was with David. Many were his troubles, but *the Lord delivered him out of them all*; and particularly out of this, which here we have an account of.

1. He enquired of the Lord, both concerning his duty, *Shall I pursue after this troop?* And concerning the event, *Shall I overtake them?* ver. 8. It was a great advantage to David, that he had the high priest with him, and the breast-plate of judgment, which, as a publick person, he might consult in all his affairs, Numb. xxvii. 21. We cannot think, that he left Abiathar and the ephod at Ziklag, for then he and it had been carried away by the Amalekites, unless we may suppose them hid by a special providence, that they might be ready for David to consult at his return. If we conclude that David had his priest and ephod with him, in the camp of the Philistines, it was certainly a great neglect in him, that he did not enquire of the Lord, by them, concerning his engagement to Achish: Perhaps, he was ashamed to own his re-

ligion so far among the uncircumcised; but now he begins to apprehend, that this trouble is brought upon him to correct him for that oversight; and therefore the first thing he doth, is to call for the ephod. It is well if we get this good by our afflictions, to be minded by them of neglected duties, and particularly to be quickened by them to enquire of the Lord. See 1 Chron. xv. 13. David had no room to doubt, but that his war against these Amalekites was just, and he had an inclination strong enough to set upon them, when it was for the recovery of that which was dearest to him in this world, and yet he would not go about it without asking counsel of God, thereby owning his dependence upon God, and submission to him. If we thus, in all our ways, acknowledge God, we may expect that he will direct our steps, as he did David's here, answering him above what he asked, with an assurance, that he should recover all.

2. He went himself in person, and took with him all the force he had, in pursuit of the Amalekites, ver. 9, 10. See how quickly, how easily, how effectually, the mutiny among his soldiers was quashed by his patience and faith. When they *spake of stoning him*, ver. 6. if he had spake of hanging them, or had ordered that the ringleaders of the faction should immediately have had their heads struck off, though it had been just, yet, it might have been of pernicious consequence to his interest in this critical juncture; and, while he and his men had been fighting it out, the Amalekites would have clearly carried off their spoil: but when he, as a deaf man, heard not, smothered his resentments, and *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*, the tumult of the people was stilled by his gentleness, and the power of God on their hearts; and being thus mildly treated, they are now as ready to follow his foot, as they were, but a little before, to fly in his face. Meekness is the security of any government.

All his men were willing to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, and he needed them all, but he was forced to drop a third part of them by the way, two hundred of his six were so fatigued with their long march, and so sunk under the load of their grief, that they could not pass the brook Besor, but staid behind there. This was, 1. A great trial of David's faith, whether he could go on in a dependence upon the word of God, when so many of his men failed him. When we are disappointed and discouraged in our expectations from second causes, then to go on with cheerfulness, confiding in the divine power, this is giving glory to God, by believing against hope in hope. 2. A great instance of David's tenderness to his men, that he would by no means urge them beyond their strength, though the case it self was so very urgent. The son of David thus considers the frame of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits, and conflicts: but where we are weak, there he is kind, nay, more, there he is strong, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

3. Providence threw one in their way that gave them intelligence of the enemy's motions, and guided theirs; a poor Egyptian lad, as despicable a piece of man's flesh as one should see alive, and yet is made instrumental of a great deal of good to David. *God chooseth the foolish things of the world, with them to confound the wise*. Observe, 1. His master's cruelty to him. He had got out of him all the service he could, and, when he fell sick, probably, being overtoiled with his work, he barbarously left him to perish in the field, when he was in no such haste, but he might have put him into some of the carriages, and brought him home, or at least have left him wherewithal to support himself. That master has the spirit of an Amalekite, not of an Israelite, that can thus use a servant worse than one would use a beast. *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel*. This Amalekite thought he should now have servants enow of the Israelite captives, and therefore cared not what became of his Egyptian slave; but could willingly let him die in a ditch, for want of necessaries, while he was *eating and drinking*, ver. 16. Justly did providence make this poor servant, that was thus basely abused, instrumental towards the destruction of a whole army of Amalekites, and his master among the rest: for God hears the cry of oppressed servants. 2. David's compassion to him; though he had reason to think, he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, yet finding him in distress, he generously relieved him, not only with *bread and water*, ver. 11. but with *figs and raisins*, ver. 12. Though the Israelites were in haste, and had no great plenty for themselves, yet they would not *forebear to deliver one that was drawn unto death*, nor say, *Behold, we knew it not*, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. They are unworthy the name of Israelites, who shut up the bowels of their compassions from persons in distress. It was also prudently done to relieve this Egyptian, for, though despicable, he was capable of doing them service, so it proved, though they were not certain of it, when they relieved him. It is a good reason, why we should neither do any injury, nor deny a kindness, to any man, because we know not but some time or other, it may be in his power to return either a kindness, or an injury. 3. The intelligence David received from this poor Egyptian, when he was come to himself. He gave him an account concerning his party. (1.) What they had done, ver. 14. *We made an invasion*, so and so. The countries which David had pretended to Achish to have made an incursion upon, chap. xxvii. 10. they really had invaded and laid waste. What was then false, now proved too true. 2. Whither they were gone, ver. 15. This he promised David to inform him of,

of, upon condition he would spare his life, and protect him from his master, who, if he could hear of him again (he thought) would add cruelty to cruelty. Such an opinion this poor Egyptian had of the obligation of an oath, that he desired no greater security for his life than that, *Swear unto me by God*, not by the gods of Egypt, or Amalek, but the one supreme God.

4. David being directed to the place, where they lay securely celebrating their triumphs, fell upon them, and, as he used to pray, *saw his desire upon his enemies*.

1. The spoilers were cut off. The Amalekites finding the booty rich, and being got with it (as they thought) out of the reach of danger, were making themselves very merry with it, *ver. 16*. All thoughts of war were laid aside, nor were they in any haste to house their prey, but *spread themselves abroad on the earth*, in the most careless manner that could be, and there they were found *eating and drinking, and dancing*, probably, in honour of their idol gods, to whom they gave the praise of their success. In this posture David surprized them, which made the conquest of them, and the blow he gave them, the more easy to him, and the more dismal to them. Then are sinners nearest to ruin, when they cry *peace and safety*, and *put the evil day far from them*. Nor doth any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage against us than sensuality, and the indulgence of the flesh. *Eating and drinking, and dancing*, has been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. Finding them thus off their guard, and from their arms, many of them, it may be, drunk and unable to make any resistance, he put them all to the sword, and only four hundred escaped, *ver. 17*. Thus is the triumphing of the wicked short, and wrath comes on them, as on Belshazzar, when they are in the midst of their jollity.

2. The spoil was recovered and brought off, and nothing was lost, but a great deal gotten. 1. They retrieved all their own, *ver. 18, 19*. *David rescued his two wives*; that is mentioned particularly, because that pleased David more than all the rest of his achievements. Providence had so ordered it, that the Amalekites carefully preserved all that they had taken, concluding that they kept it for themselves, but really they preserved it for the right owners; so that there were nothing lacking to them; so it proved, when they concluded all was gone: so much better is God oftentimes to us, than our own fears. Our Lord Jesus was the son of David, and the son of Abraham, for in this he resembled them both, that he *took the prey from the mighty, and led captivity captive*, Abraham, *Gen. xiv. 16*. and David here. But this was not all. 2. They took all that belonged to the Amalekites besides, *ver. 20*. *Flocks and herds*; either such as were taken from the Philistines, and others, which David had the disposal of by the law of war; or, perhaps, he made a sally into the enemy's country, and fetched off these flocks and herds from thence, as interest for his own. This drove was put in the van of the triumph, with this proclamation, *This is David's spoil*. This we may thank him for. Those who lately spake of stoning him, now caressed him, and cried him up, because they got by him, more than they had then lost. Thus is the world and its sentiments governed by interest.

21. ¶ And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. 22. Then answered all the wicked men, and *men of Belial*, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife, and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart. 23. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us, into our hand. 24. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. 25. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute, and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. 26. ¶ And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, (saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD) 27. To *them* which *were* in Bethel, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir, 28. And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa, 29. And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites, 30. And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which

Nº. 22.

were in Chorashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach, 31. And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

We have here an account of the distribution of the spoil which was taken from the Amalekites. When the Amalekites had carried away a rich booty from the land of Judah and the Philistines they spent it in sensuality, in eating and drinking, and making merry with it: but David disposed of the spoil taken after another manner, as one that knew that justice and charity must govern us, in the use we make of whatever we have in this world: what God gives us, he designs we should do good with, not serve our lusts with. In the distribution of the spoil,

1. David was just and kind to those who abode by the stuff. They came forth to meet the conquerors, and to congratulate their success, though they could not contribute to it, *ver. 21*. for we should rejoice in a good work done, though providence had laid us aside, and rendered us incapable of lending a hand to it. David received their address very kindly, and was so far from upbraiding them with their weakness, that he shewed himself solicitous concerning them; he saluted them, he asked them of peace, so the word is; enquired how they did, because he had left them faint, and not well. Or, wished them peace, bid them be of good cheer, they should lose nothing by staying behind; for of this they seemed afraid, David, perhaps, saw it in their countenance.

(1.) There were those that opposed their coming in to share in the spoil; some of David's soldiers, probably, the same that spake of stoning him, spake now of defrauding their brethren, they are called wicked men, and *men of Belial*, *ver. 22*. Let not the best of men think it strange, if they have those attending them that are very bad, and they cannot prevail to make them better. We may suppose, David had instructed his soldiers, and prayed with them, and yet there were many among them that were wicked men, and men of Belial; oft terrified with the apprehensions of death, and yet wicked men still, and men of Belial. These made a motion, that the two hundred men, who abode by the stuff, should only have their wives and children given them, but none of their goods. Well might they be called wicked men; for this speaks them, 1. Very covetous themselves, and greedy of gain; for hereby the more would fall to their share. A while ago they would gladly have given half their own to recover the other half, yet now they have all their own they are not content, unless they can have their brethren's too; so soon do men forget their low estate. All seek their own, and too often more than their own. 2. Very barbarous to their brethren; for to give them their wives and children, and not their estates, was to give them the mouths without the meat. What joy could they have of their families, if they had nothing to maintain them? Was this to do as they would be done by? These are men of Belial indeed, who delight in putting hardships upon their brethren, and care not who is starved, so they may be fed to the full.

(2.) David would by no means admit this, but ordered that they who tarried behind should come in for an equal share in the spoils with those that went to the battle, *ver. 23, 24*. This he did, 1. In gratitude to God. The spoil we have, is that which God has given us, we have it from him, and therefore must use it under his direction, as good stewards. Let this check us when we are tempted to misapply that which God has entrusted us with of this world's goods; nay, I must not do so with that which God has given me, not serve Satan, and a base lust, with those things which are not only the creatures of his power, but the gifts of his bounty. God has righted us, by *delivering the company that came against us into our hand*, let not us then wrong our brethren; God has been kind to us in preserving us, and giving us victory, let not us be unkind to them. God's mercy to us should make us merciful to one another. 2. In justice to them. It was true, they tarried behind, but, (1.) It was not for want of good will to the cause, or to their brethren, but because they had not strength to keep up with them. It was not their fault, but their infelicity, and therefore they ought not to suffer for it. (2.) Though they tarried behind now, they had formerly engaged many a time in battle, and done their part as well as the best of their brethren, and their former services must be considered, now there was something to be got. (3.) Even now they did good service, for they abode by the stuff, to guard that, which some body must take care of, else that might have fallen into the hands of some other enemy. Every post of service is not alike a post of honour, yet those that are any way serviceable to the common interest, though in a meaner station, ought to share in the common advantages; as in the natural body, every member has its use, and therefore has its share of the nourishment. 1. Thus David overruled the wicked men, and men of Belial, with reason, but with a great deal of mildness (for the force of reason is sufficient, without the force of passion) he calls them *his brethren*, *ver. 23*. Superiors oft lose their authority by haughtiness, but seldom by courtesy and condescension. 2. Thus he settled the matter for time to come, made it a statute of his kingdom, (a statute of distributions, *primo Davidis*) an ordinance of war, *ver. 25*. that *as his part is that goes down to the battle*, and jeopard his life in the high places of the field, so shall his be that guards the carriages.

Abraham returned the spoils of Sodom to the right owners, and quit-
ted his title to them, *jure belli*. If we help others to recover their
right, we must not think that alters the property, and makes it ours.
God appointed, that the spoil of Midian should be divided between
the soldiers, and the whole congregation, *Num.* xxxi. 27. The
case here was somewhat different, but governed by the same gene-
ral rule that we are members one of another. The disciples, at
first, *had all things common*, and we should still be *ready to distri-
bute, willing to communicate*, *1 Tim.* vi. 18. When kings of ar-
mies did flee apace, she that tarried at home did divide the spoil,
Psal. lxxviii. 12.

2. David was generous and kind to all his friends. When he
had given every one his own with interest, there was a considera-
ble overplus, which David, as general, had the disposal of; proba-
bly the spoil of the tents of the Amalekites, consisted much in plate
and jewels, (*Judg.* viii. 24, 26.) and those, because, he thought
they would but make his own soldiers proud and effeminate, he
thought fit to make presents of to his friends, even the *elders of Ju-
dah*, *ver.* 28. Several places are here named, to which he sent
of these presents; all of them, in or near the tribe of Judah: And
the first place named is Bethel, which signifies, the house of God;
that place shall be first served for its name's sake. Or, perhaps, it
means not the city so called, but the place where the ark was,
which was therefore *the house of God*: Thither David sent the first
and best, to them that attended there; for his sake, who is the first
and best. Hebron is named last, *ver.* 31. probably, because, thi-
ther he sent the residuum, which was the largest share, having an
eye upon that place, as fittest for his head quarters, *2 Sam.* ii. 1.

In David's sending these presents, observe, 1. His generosity;
he aimed not to enrich himself, but to serve his country, and there-
fore, God afterwards enriched him, and set him to rule the coun-
try he had served. It becomes gracious souls to be generous; *there
is that scattereth, and yet increaseth*. 2. His gratitude. He sent
presents to *all the places where he and his men were wont to haunt*,
ver. 31. *i. e.* to all that he had received kindness from, that had
sheltered him, sent him intelligence, or provisions. Note, Honesty
as well as honour, obliges us to requite the favours that have been
done us, or at least, make a real acknowledgment of them, as far
as is in the power of our hand. 3. His piety; that he calls it a blef-
sing, for no present we give to our friends, will be a comfort to
them, but as it is made so by the blessing of God; it intimates,
that his prayers for them, accompanied his present. Also, that he
sends it them out of *the spoil of the enemies of the Lord*; so he calls
them not his enemies, that they might rejoice in the victory for
the Lord's sake, and might join with him in thanksgivings for it.
4. His policy. That he sent these presents among his countrymen,
to oblige them to be ready to appear for him upon his accession to
the throne, which he now saw at hand. *A man's gift maketh room
for him*. He was fit to be a king, who thus shewed the bounty
and liberality of a king. Munificence recommends a man more
than magnificence. The Ziphites had none of his presents, nor
the men of Keilah; and thus he shewed, that though he was such
a saint as not to revenge affronts, yet he was not such a fool, as
not to take notice of them.

C H A P. XXXI.

In the foregoing chapter we had David conquering, yea, more than a
conqueror: In this chapter we have Saul conquered, and worse than
a captive: Providence ordered it, that both these things should be
in the doing just at the same time: The very same day, perhaps,
that David was triumphing over the Amalekites, were the Phi-
listines triumphing over Saul: One is set over against the other,
that men may see what comes of trusting in God, and what comes
of forsaking him. We left Saul ready to engage the Philistines,
with a shaking hand, and an aching heart, having had his doom
read him from hell, which he would not regard, when it was read
him from heaven, let us now see what comes of him. Here is, 1.
His army routed, *ver.* 1. 2. *His three sons slain*, *ver.* 2. 3.
Himself wounded, *ver.* 3. *Slain by his own hand*, *ver.* 4. *His
armour-bearer*, *ver.* 5. *and all his men*, *ver.* 6. 4. *His
country possessed by the Philistines*, *ver.* 7. *His camp plundered*,
his dead body deserted, *ver.* 8. *His fall triumphed in*, *ver.* 9.
His body publicly exposed, *ver.* 10. *And with difficulty rescued by
the men of Jabesh-gilead*, *ver.* 11,—13. Thus fell the man that
was rejected of God.

1. **N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel: and
the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines,
and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the
Philistines followed hard upon Saul, and upon his sons;
and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and
Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3. And the battle went fore a-
gainst Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was fore
wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul unto his ar-
mour-bearer, Draw thy sword and thrust me through
therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me
through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would

not; for he was fore afraid: therefore Saul took a sword
and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw
that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and
died with him. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and
his armour-bearer, and all his men that same day toge-
ther. 7. ¶ And when the men of Israel that were on
the other side of the valley, and they that were on the
other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and
that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities,
and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

The day of recompence is now come, in which Saul must ac-
count for the blood of the Amalekites, which he had sinfully spa-
red, and that of the priests, which he had more sinfully spilt, and
that of David, which he would have spilt, must come into the ac-
count. Now his day is come to fall, as David foresaw, when he
should descend into battle, and perish, *chap.* xxvi. 10. Come and
see the *righteous judgments of God*.

1. He sees his soldiers fall about him, *ver.* 1. Whether the Phi-
listines were more numerous, better posted, and better led on, or
what other advantages they had, we are not told, but it seems they
were more vigorous, for they gave the onset, they fought against
Israel, and the Israelites fled, and fell: The best of his troops were
put into disorder, multitudes slain; probably those whom Saul had em-
ployed in pursuing David. Thus, they who had followed him,
and served him in his sin, go before him in his fall, and share with
him in his plagues.

2. He sees his son fall before him. The victorious Philistines
pressed most forcibly upon the king of Israel, and those about him;
his three sons were next him, (it is probable) and they were all three
slain before his face, to his great grief, for they were the hopes of
his family, and his great terror, for they were now the guard of
his person, and he can conclude no other, but that his own turn
comes next. His sons are named here, *ver.* 2. and it grieves us to
find Jonathan among them: That wise, valiant, good man; that
was as much David's friend, as Saul was his enemy; yet he falls
with the rest. Duty to his father would not permit him to stay at
home, or to retire when the armies engaged, and providence so
orders it, that he falls in the common fate of his family, though
he never involved himself in the guilt of it; so that the observa-
tion of Eliphaz doth not hold, *Job.* iv. 7. *Who ever perished being
innocent?* for here was one. What shall we say to it? 1. God
would hereby compleat the vexation of Saul in his dying moments,
and the judgment that was to be executed upon his house. If the
family must fall, Jonathan that is one of it, must fall with it. 2.
He would hereby make David's way to the crown, the more clear
and open. For though Jonathan himself would have cheerfully
resigned all his title and interest to him, we have no reason to su-
spect any other, yet it is very probable many of the people would
have made use of his name for the support of the house of Saul, or at
least would have come in but slowly to David. If Ishbosheth (who
was now left at home as one unfit for action, and so escaped) had
so many friends, what would Jonathan have had, who had been
the darling of the people, and had never forfeited their favour? They
that were so fond to have a king like the nations, would be zealous
for the right line, especially if that threw the crown upon such a
head as Jonathan's: This would have embarrassed David; and if
Jonathan could have prevailed to bring in all his interest to David,
then it would have been said, that Jonathan had made him king,
whereas God was to have all the glory: *This is the Lord's doing*.
So that, though the death of Jonathan would be a great affliction
to David, yet by making him mindful of his own frailty, as well
as by facilitating his accession to the throne, it would be an advan-
tage to him. 3. God would hereby shew us, that the difference,
between good and bad, is to be made in the other world, not in
this: *All things come alike to all*. We cannot judge of the spiritual
or eternal state of any, by the manner of their death, for in that
there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked.

3. He himself is fore wounded by the Philistines, and then slain
by his own hand. The archers hit him, *ver.* 3. so that he could
neither fight nor fly, and therefore must inevitably fall into their
hands: Thus, to make him the more miserable, destruction comes
gradually upon him, and he dies, so as to feel himself die. To
that extremity was he now reduced, that, (1.) He was desirous
to die by the hand of his own servant, rather than by the hand of
the Philistines, lest they should abuse him as they did Samson.
Miserable man! He finds himself dying, and all his care is, to keep
his body out of the hands of the Philistines, but no care to resign
his soul into the hands of God, who gave it; *Ecc.* xii. 7. As
he lived, so he died, proud, and jealous, and a terror to himself,
and all about him. They who rightly understand themselves, think
it of no small account, in comparison how it is with them in death,
so it may but be well with them after death. Those are in a de-
plorable condition indeed, who, being *bitter in soul long for death*,
but it cometh not, *Job.* iii. 20, 21. especially those, who, despairing
of the mercy of God, like Judas, leap into hell before them, to e-
scape a hell within them. (2.) When he could not obtain that fa-
vour, he became his own executioner, thinking hereby to avoid
shame, but running upon a heinous sin, and, with it, entailing up-

on his own name, a mark of perpetual infamy, as *felo de se*, a self-murderer. Jonathan, who received his death wound from the hand of the Philistines, and bravely yielded to the fate of war, died in the bed of honour, but Saul died, as a fool dieth, as a coward dieth, a proud fool, a sneaking coward; died, as a man that had neither fear of God, nor hope in God, neither the reason of a man, nor the religion of an Israelite, nor the resolution of a soldier. Let us all pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation*, this temptation. His armour-bearer would not run him through, and he did well to refuse it; for no man's servant ought to be a slave to his master's lusts or passions of any kind; the reason given, is, that he was fore afraid, not of death, for he himself run wilfully upon that immediately; but having a profound reverence for the king, his master, he could not conquer that, so far as to do him any hurt; or, perhaps, he feared, lest his trembling hand should have given him but half a blow, and so have put him to the greater misery.

4. His armour-bearer, who refused to kill him, refused not to die with him, but *fell likewise upon his sword*, ver. 5. This was an aggravating circumstance of the death of Saul, that, by the example of his wickedness, in murdering himself, he drew in his servant to be guilty of the same wickedness, and *perish not alone in his iniquity*. The Jews say, that Saul's armour-bearer was Doeg, whom he preferred to that dignity for killing the priests, and if so, justly doth his *violent dealing return on his own head*. David had foretold concerning him, that God would *destroy him for ever*, Psalm. lii. 5.

5. The country was put into such a confusion, by the rout of Saul's army, that the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities (on that side Jordan, as it might be read) quitted them, and the Philistines, for a time, had possession of them, till things were settled in Israel; ver. 7. Such a sad pass had Saul by his wickedness brought his country to, which might have remained in the hands of the uncircumcised, if David had not been raised up, to repair the breaches of it. See what a king he proved, for whom they rejected God and Samuel. They had still done wickedly (it is to be feared) as well as he, and therefore *were consumed, both they and their king*, as the prophet had foretold concerning them, chap. xii. 25. And to this, reference is had long after, *Hos. xiii. 10, 11. Where are thy saviours in all thy cities, of whom thou saidst, give me a king and princes; I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath; i. e.* He was a plague to thee living and dying: thou couldst expect no other.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. 11. ¶ And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul: 12. All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The scripture makes no mention of the souls of Saul and his sons, what became of them after they were dead; secret things belong not to us: but of their bodies only.

1. How they were basely abused by the Philistines. The day after the battle, when they had recovered the fatigue, they came to strip the slain, and, among the rest, found the bodies of Saul, and his three sons, ver. 8. Saul's armour-bearer, perhaps, intended to honour his master, by following the example of his self-murder, and to shew thereby how well he loved him; but if he had consulted his reason more than his passions, he would have spared that foolish compliment, not only in justice to his own life, but in kindness to his master, to whom, by the opportunity of survivorship, he might have done all the service that could be done him by any man after he was dead: for he might, in the night, have conveyed away his body, and those of his sons, and buried them decently. But such false and foolish notions as these, vain men have, (though they would be wise) of giving and receiving honour. Nay, it should seem, Saul might have saved himself the fatal thrust, and have made his escape, for the pursuers (in fear of whom, he slew himself) came not to the place, where he was till next day: But whom God will destroy, he infatuates, and utterly consumes with his terrors. See *Job xviii. 5, &c.*

Finding Saul's body, (which now it lay extended on the bloody turf, was distinguishable from the rest by its length, as it was while

erect, by its height, when he proudly overlooked the surrounding crowd,) they will, in that, triumph over Israel's crown, and poorly gratify a barbarous and brutish revenge, by insulting the deserted corpse, which, when alive, they had stood in awe of.

1. They cut off his head. Had they designed in this to revenge the cutting off of Goliath's head, they would rather have cut off the head of David, who did that execution, when he was in their country; they intended it, in general, for a reproach to Israel, who promised themselves that a crowned, an anointed head would have saved them from the Philistines, and a particular reproach to Saul, who was taller by the head than other men, which, perhaps, he had been wont to boast of, but was now shorter by the head.

2. They stripped him of his armour, ver. 9. and sent that to be set up as a trophy of their victory, in the house of Ashtaroth, their goddess, ver. 10. and we are told, 1 *Chron. x. 10.* (though it be omitted here) that they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. Thus did they ascribe the honour of their victory, not as they ought to have done to the real justice of the true God, but to the imaginary power of their false gods; and by these respects, paid to pretended deities, shamed those, who give not the praise of their achievements to the living God. Ashtaroth, the idol, that Israel had many a time gone a whoring after, now triumphs over them.

3. They sent express throughout their country, and ordered publick notice to be given, in the houses of their gods, of this victory they had obtained, (ver. 9.) that publick rejoicings might be made, and thanks given to their gods. This David regretted sorely, 2 *Sam. i. 20. Tell it not in Gath.*

4. They fastened his body, and the bodies of his sons (as appears, ver. 12.) to the wall of Beth-shan; a city that lay not far from Gilboa, and very near to the river Jordan. Hither the dead bodies were dragged, and here hung up in chains to be devoured by the birds of prey. Saul slew himself to avoid being abused by the Philistines, and never was royal corpse so abused as his was, perhaps, the more, if they understood that he slew himself, and for what reason. He that thinks to save his honour by sin, will certainly lose it. See, to what a height of insolence the Philistines were arrived just before David was raised up, who perfectly subdued them. Now they had slain Saul and his sons, they thought the land of Israel was their own for ever, but they soon found themselves deceived. When God has accomplished his whole work by them, he will accomplish it upon them. See *Isa. x. 6, 7.*

2. How they were bravely rescued by the men of Jabesh-Gilead. Little more than the river of Jordan lay between Bethshan, and Jabesh-Gilead, and Jordan was in that place, passable by its fords, a bold adventure is therefore made by the valiant men of that city, who, in the night passed the river, took down the dead bodies, and gave them decent burial, ver. 11, 12, 13. This they did, 1. Out of a common concern for the honour of Israel, or the land of Israel, which ought not to be defiled, by the exposing of any dead bodies, and, especially of the crown of Israel, which was thus profaned by the uncircumcised. 2. Out of a particular sense of gratitude to Saul, for his zeal and forwardness to rescue them from the Ammonites, when he first came to the throne, chap. i. It is an argument of a generous spirit, and an encouragement to beneficence, when the remembrance of kindnesses is thus retained, and they are thus returned in an extremity. The men of Jabesh-Gilead had done Saul better service, if they had sent their valiant men to him sooner, to strengthen him against the Philistines: But his day was come to fall, and now this is all the service they can do him, in honour to his memory.

We find not, that any general mourning was made for the death of Saul, as was for the death of Samuel, chap. xxv. 1. only those Gileadites of Jabesh did him honour at his death: For, 1. They made a burning for the bodies to perfume them: So some understood the burning of them. They burnt spices over them, ver. 12. And that it was usual thus to do honour to their deceased friends, at least their princes, appears by the account of Aha's funeral, 2 *Chron. xvi. 14. That they made a very great burning for him.* Or (as some think) they burnt the flesh, because, it began to putrefy. 2. They buried the bodies, when by burning over them, they had sweetened them (or, if they burnt them, they buried the bones and ashes) under a tree, which served for a grave-stone and monument. And lastly, they *fasted seven days*, i. e. each day of the seven they fasted till the evening; thus they lamented the death of Saul, and the present distracted state of Israel, and, perhaps, joined prayers with their fasting, for the re-establishment of their shattered state. Though *when the wicked perish, there is shouting*, i. e. it is to be hoped a better state of things will ensue, which will be matter of joy, yet humanity obligeth us to shew a decent respect to dead bodies, especially to those of princes. This book began with the birth of Samuel, and now it ends with the burial of Saul, the comparing of which two together, will teach us to prefer the honour that comes from God, before any of the honours which this world pretends to have the disposal of.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

Of the Second BOOK of

S A M U E L,

With Practical Observations.

This Book is the history of the reign of king David. We had in the foregoing Book an account of his designation to the government and his struggles with Saul, which ended, at length, in the death of his persecutor: This Book begins with his accession to the throne, and is entirely taken up with the affairs of the government, during the forty years he reigned, and therefore is entitled, by the Seventy, The Second Book of the Kings. It gives an account of David's triumphs and his troubles. 1. His triumphs over the house of Saul, chap. i, — iv. Over the Jebusites and Philistines, chap. v. In the bringing up of the ark, chap. vi. and vii. Over the neighbour nations that oppos'd him, chap. viii, — x. And so far the history is agreeable to what one might expect from David's character, and the choice made of him. But his cloud has a dark side. 2. We have his troubles, the cause of them, his sin in the matter of Uriah, chap. xi. and xii. The troubles themselves from the sin of Amnon, chap. xiii. The rebellion of Absalom, chap. xiv, — xix. and of Sheba, chap. xx. And the plague in Israel for his numbring the people, chap. xxiv. besides the famine for the Gibeonites, chap. xxi. His song we have, chap. xxii. and his words and worships, chap. xxiii. Many things in this history are very instructive; but for the hero, that is the subject of it, though in many instances he appears here very great, and very good, and very much the favourite of heaven, yet it must be confessed his honour shines brighter in his Psalms than in his Annals.

C H A P. I.

In the close of the foregoing Book (with which this is connected as a continuation of the same history) we had Saul's exit, he went down slain to the pit, though he was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, we are now to look towards the rising sun, and to enquire where David is, and what he is doing. In this chapter we have, (1.) Tidings brought him to Ziklag of the death of Saul and Jonathan, by an Amalekite, who undertook to bring him a particular narrative of it, ver. 1, — 10. (2.) David's sorrowful resentment of these tidings, ver. 11, 12. (3.) Justice done upon the messenger who boasted that he had helped Saul to dispatch himself, ver. 13, — 16. (4.) An elegy which David penned upon this occasion, ver. 17, 27. And in all this David's breast appears very happily free from the sparks, either of revenge or ambition, and he observes a very good decorum.

1. **N**OW it came to pass, after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag: 2. It came even to pass on the third day, that behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3. And David said unto him, From whence camest thou? and he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. 5. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? 6. And the young man that told him, said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear: and lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after

him. 7. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me: and I answered, Here am I. 8. And he said unto me, Who art thou? and I answered him, I am an Amalekite. 9. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. 10. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

Here is, 1. David settling again in Ziklag, his own city, after he had rescued his family and friends out of the hands of the Amalekites, ver. 1. he abode in Ziklag. Thence he was now sending presents to his friends, 1 Sam. xxx. 26. and there he was ready to receive those that came into his interests; not men in distress and debt, as his first followers were, but persons of quality in their country, *mighty men, men of war, and captains of thousands*, as we find, 1 Chron. xii. 1, 8, 20. such came day by day to him, God stirring up their hearts to do so, till he had a *great host, like the host of God*, as it is said there, ver. 22. The secret springs of revolutions are unaccountable, and must be resolved into that providence, which turns all hearts as the rivers of water.

2. Intelligence brought him thither of the death of Saul. It was strange he did not leave some spies about the camps, to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement, a sign he desired, not Saul's woful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believeth doth not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not uneasy while it is in the coming.

1. The messenger presents himself to David, as an express, in the posture of a mourner for the deceased prince, and a subject to the succeeding one. He came with his clothes rent, and obeisance to David, ver. 2. pleasing himself with the fancy that he had the honour to be the first that did him homage as his sovereign, but it proved he was the first that received from him sentence of death.

as his judge. He told David he came from the camp of Israel, and intimated the bad posture it was in, when he said he was escaped out of it, having much ado to get away with his life; *ver. 3.*

2. He gives him a general account of the issue of the battle. David was very desirous to know how the matter went, as one that had more reasons than one to be concerned for the publick, and he told him very distinctly that the army of Israel was routed, many slain, and among the rest Saul and Jonathan, *ver. 4.* he names only Saul and Jonathan, because he knew David would be most solicitous to know their fate; for Saul was the man whom he most feared, and Jonathan the man whom he most loved.

3. He gives him a more particular account of the death of Saul. It is probable, David had heard, by the report of others, what the issue of the war was, for multitudes resorted to him, it should seem, upon that inducement; but he was desirous to know the certainty of the report concerning Saul and Jonathan, either because he was not forward to believe it, or because he would not proceed upon it, to make his own claims, till he was fully assured of it. He therefore asks, *How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan are dead?* In answer to which the young man tells him a very ready story, putting it past doubt that Saul was dead, for he himself had been not only an eye-witness of his death, but an instrument of it; and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He saith nothing in his narrative of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul, thinking (as David understood it well enough, *chap. iv. 10.*) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is,

1. Very particular. That he happened by chance upon the place where Saul was, *ver. 6.* as a passenger, not as a soldier; and therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dextrously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die: he called this stranger to him, *ver. 7.* enquired what countryman he was, for, provided he were not a Philistine, he would gladly receive from his hand the *Coup de grace* (as the French call it, concerning those that are broke on the wheel) the gracious stroke; that might dispatch him out of his pain. Understanding that he was an Amalekite (neither one of his subjects, nor one of his enemies) he begs this favour from him, *ver. 9.* *Stand upon me, and slay me.* He is now sick of his dignity, and willing to be trampled upon; sick of his life, and willing to be slain. Who then would be inordinately fond of life or honour? The case may be such, even with those that have no hope in their death, that yet they may *desire to die, and death flee from them*, *Rev. ix. 6.* *Anguish is come upon me;* so we read it; as a complaint of the pain and terror his spirit was seized with: If his conscience now brought to mind the javelin he had cast at David, his pride, malice and perfidiousness, and especially the murder of the priests, no marvel that anguish came upon him: moles (they say) open their eyes when they are dying. Sense of unpardoned guilt will make death indeed the king of terrors. They that have baffled their convictions, will, perhaps, in their dying moments, be overpowered by them. The margin reads it as a complaint of the inconvenience of his clothes; that his coat of mail, which he had for defence, or his embroidered coat, which he had for ornament, hindered him, that he could not get the spear far enough into his body, or so straitened him, now his body swelled with anguish, that he could not expire: let no man's clothes be his pride, for it may so happen, that they may be his burthen and snare. Hereupon, saith our young man, *I stood upon him, and slew him*, *ver. 10.* At which word, perhaps, he observed David look upon him with some shew of displeasure, and therefore he excuseth it, in the next words; *for I was sure he could not live;* his life was whole in him indeed, but he would certainly have fallen into the hands of the Philistines, or given himself another thrust.

2. It is doubtful whether this story be true. If it was, the righteousness of God is to be observed, that Saul, who spared the Amalekites, in contempt of the divine command, received his death's wound from an Amalekite. But most interpreters think it was false, and that, though he might happen to be present, yet he was not assisting in the death of Saul, but told David so, in expectation that he would have rewarded him for it, as having done him a piece of good service. They who would sometimes rejoice at the fall of an enemy, are apt to measure others by themselves, and to think they will do so too. But a man after God's own heart, is not to be judged of by common men. I am not clear whether this young man's story were true or no: it may consist with the narrative in the chapter before, and be an addition to it, as Peter's account of the death of Judas, *Acts i. 18.* is to the narrative, *Matt. xxvii. 7.* What is there called a sword, may here be called a spear; or, when he fell upon his sword, he leaned on his spear.

3. However, he produced that which was proof sufficient of the death of Saul, the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm. It should seem these Saul was so foolishly fond of, as to wear them in the field of battle, which made him the fair mark for the archers, by distinguishing him from those a-

bout him: but as pride (we say) *feels no cold*, so it fears no danger from that which gratifies it. These fell into the hands of this Amalekite: Saul spared the best of their spoil, and now the best of his came to one of that devoted Nation. He brought them to David as the rightful owner of them now Saul was dead, not doubting but by his officiousness herein, to recommend himself to the best of preferments in his court or camp. The tradition of the Jews is, that this Amalekite was the son of Doeg, (for the Amalekites were descendents from Edom) and that Doeg who, they suppose, was Saul's armour-bearer before he slew himself, gave Saul's crown and bracelet (the ensigns of his royalty) to his son, and bid him carry them to David, to curry favour with him. But this is a groundless conceit, Doeg's son, it is likely, was so well known to Saul, that he needed not ask him as he did, *ver. 8.* *Who art thou?* David had been long waiting for the crown, and now it is brought him by an Amalekite. See how God can serve his own purposes of kindness to his people, even by designing (ill designing) men, who aim at nothing but to set up themselves.

11. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them, and likewise all the men that *were* with him. 12. And they mourned and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. 13. ¶ And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, *I am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. 14. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand, to destroy the LORDS anointed? 15. And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head: for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORDS anointed.

Here is, 1. David's resentment of these tidings. So far was he from falling into a transport of joy, as the Amalekite expected, that he falls into a passion of weeping, *rent his clothes*, *ver. 11.* *mourned and fasted*, *ver. 12.* not only for his people Israel, and Jonathan his friend, but for Saul his enemy. This he did not only as a gentleman, and a man of honour, in observance of that decorum which forbids us to insult over those that are fallen, and requires us to attend our relations to the grave with respect, whatever we lost by their life, or got by their death; but as a good man and a man of conscience, that had forgiven the injuries Saul had done him, and bore him no malice: He knew it before his son wrote it, *Prov. xxiv. 17, 18.* that if we *rejoice when our enemy falls, the Lord sees it, and it displeaseth him*: and, *he that is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished*, *Prov. xvii. 5.* By this it appears, that those passages in David's psalms which speak his desire of, and triumph in, the ruin of his enemies, proceed not from a spirit of revenge, or any irregular passion, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the publick good; for by what he did here when he heard of Saul's death, we may perceive that his natural temper was very tender, and that he was kindly affected even to those that hated him. He was very sincere, no question, in his mourning for Saul, and it was not pretended, nor a copy of his countenance only. His passion was so strong on this occasion, that it moved those about him, *all that were with him*, at least in complaisance to him, *rent their clothes, and they fasted till even*, in token of their sorrow, and, probably, it was a religious fast, they humbled themselves under the hand of God, and prayed for the repairing of the breaches made upon Israel by this defeat.

2. The reward he gave to him that brought him the tidings; instead of preferring him he put him to death; judged him out of his own mouth as a murderer of his prince, and ordered him forthwith to be executed for the same. What a surprize was this to the messenger, who thought he should have a good fee given him for his pains. In vain did he plead that he had Saul's order for it, that it was a real kindness to him, that he must inevitably have died however; all those pleas are over-ruled, *thy mouth has testified against thee, I have slain the Lord's anointed*, *ver. 16.* therefore thou must die.

Now, 1. David herein did not do unjustly. For, 1. The man was an Amalekite. This, lest he had mistaken it in his narrative, he made him own a second time, *ver. 13.* that nation and all that belonged to it were doomed to destruction, so that in slaying him David did what his predecessor should have done, and was rejected for not doing. 2. He did himself confess the crime, so that the evidence was, by the consent of all laws, sufficient to convict him; for every man is presumed to make the best of himself. If he did as he said, he deserved to die for treason, *ver. 14.* doing that which, it is probable, he heard Saul's own armour-bearer refuse to do; if not, yet by boasting that he had done it, he plainly shewed, that, if there had been occasion, he would have done it, and would have made nothing of it; and, by boasting of it to David, he shewed what opinion he had of him, that he would rejoice in it, as one al-

together like himself, which was an intolerable affront to him, who had himself once and again refused to *stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed*. And his lying to David, if indeed it were a lie, was highly criminal, and proved, as sooner or later that sin will prove, lying against his own head.

2. He did honourably and well. Hereby he demonstrated the sincerity of his grief; discouraged all others from thinking, by doing the like, to ingratiate themselves with him; and did that which might probably oblige the house of Saul, and win upon them, and recommend him to the people, as one that was zealous for publick justice, without regard to his own private interest. We may learn from it, that to give assistance to any in murdering themselves, directly or indirectly, if done wittingly, incurs the guilt of blood. And that the lives of princes ought to be in a special manner precious to us.

17. ¶ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son: 18. (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of the bow*: behold, *it is* written in the book of Jasher) 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21. Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be* no dew, neither *let there be* rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, *as though he had not been* anointed with oil. 22. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23. Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places. 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

When David had rent his clothes, mourned and wept, and fasted for the death of Saul, and done justice upon him, who made himself guilty of it, one would think he had made full payment of that debt of honour he owed to his memory; yet this is not all; we have here a poem he wrote on that occasion; for he was a great master of his pen, as well as sword. By this elegy he designed both to express his own resentments of this great calamity, and to impress the like on the minds of others, who ought to lay it to heart. The putting of lamentations into poems, made them, 1. The more moving and affecting. The passion of the poet, or singer, is by this way wonderfully communicated to the readers and hearers. 2. The more lasting. Thus they were made, not only to spread far, but to continue long, from generation to generation. Those might gain information by poems, that would not read history.

Here is, 1. The orders David gave with this elegy, *ver. 19. He bade them teach the children of Judah* (his own tribe, whatever others did) *the use of the bow*; either, 1. The bow used in war. Not but that the children of Judah knew how to use the bow, it was so commonly used in war, long before this, that the sword and bow were put for all weapons of war, *Gen. xlviii. 22.* but, perhaps, they had of late made more use of slings, as David in killing of Goliath, because cheaper; which David would have them now to see the inconvenience of, (for they were the archers of the Philistines that bore so hard upon Saul, *1 Sam. xxxi. 3.*) and to return more generally to the use of the bow, to exercise themselves in this weapon, that they might be in a capacity to avenge the death of their prince upon the Philistines, and to outdo them at their own weapon. It was pity but those that had such good heads, and hearts, and hands, as the children of Judah, should be well armed. David hereby shewed his authority over, and concern for, the armies of Israel, and set himself to rectify the errors of the former reign. But we find that the companies which were now come to David to Ziklag were armed with bows, *1 Chron. xii. 2!* therefore, 2. Some understand it, either of some musical instrument called a bow, to which he would have the mournful ditties sung: or, of the elegy it self; *he bade them teach the children of Judah Ketheth, the bow*, i. e. this song which was so entitled for the sake of Jonathan's bow, the achievements of which are here celebrated. Moses commanded Israel to learn his song, *Deut. xxxi. 19.* so David his. Probably, he bade the Levites teach them. It is written in the book of Jasher, there it was kept upon record, and,

from thence, transcribed into this history. That book was, probably, a collection of state poems; what is said to be written in that book, *Josh. x. 13.* is also poetical, a fragment of an historical poem. Even songs would be forgotten and lost, if they were not committed to writing, that best conservatory of knowledge.

2. The elegy it self. It is not a divine hymn, nor given by inspiration of God, to be used in divine service; nor is there any mention of God in it; but it is a human composition, and therefore was inserted, not in the book of Psalms, which, being of divine original, is preserved, but in the book of Jasher, which being only a collection of common poems, is long since lost.

This elegy speaks David to be,

1. A man of an excellent good spirit, in four things.

(1.) He was very generous to Saul, his sworn enemy: he was his father in law, his sovereign, and the anointed of the Lord, and therefore, though he had done him a great deal of wrong, he doth not seek his revenge upon his memory when he is in his grave; but, like a good man, and a man of honour, 1. He conceals his faults; and though there was no remedy but they would appear in his history, yet they should not appear in this elegy. Charity teaches us to make the best we can of every body; and those we can say no good of, to say nothing of, especially when they are gone. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* We ought to deny our selves the very satisfaction of making personal reflections upon those who have been injurious to us, much less of drawing their character from thence, as if every man must of necessity be an ill man that has done ill by us. Let the corrupt part of the memory be buried with the corrupt part of the man, earth to earth, ashes to ashes; let the blemish be hid, and a veil drawn over the deformity. 2. He celebrates that which was praise-worthy in him. He doth not commend him for that which he was not; saith nothing of his piety, or fidelity; those funeral commendations, which are gathered out of the spoils of truth, are not at all the praise of those on whom they are bestowed, but very much the dispraise of those who unjustly misplace them. But he has this to say, in honour of Saul himself, (1.) That he was *anointed with oil*, *ver. 21.* the sacred oil, which signified his elevation to, and qualification for, the government. Whatever he was otherwise, the *crown of the anointing oil of his God was upon him*, as is said of the high priest, *Lev. xxi. 12.* and on that account he was to be honoured, because God, the fountain of honour, had honoured him. (2.) That he was a man of war, a *mighty man*, *ver. 19.—21.* That he had often been victorious over the enemies of Israel, and *vexed them whithersoever he turned*, *1 Sam. xiv. 47.* His *sword returned not empty*, but satiated with blood and spoil, *ver. 22.* His disgrace and fall at last, must not make his former successes and services to be forgotten. Though his sun set under a cloud, time was when it shone bright. (3.) That, take him with Jonathan, he was a man of a very agreeable temper, that recommended himself to the affections of his subjects, *ver. 23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant.* Jonathan was always so, and Saul was so, as long as he concurred with him. Take them together, and in the pursuit of the enemy, never were men more bold, more brave, *swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions.* Observe, they that were most fierce and fiery in the camp, were no less sweet and lovely in the court: as amiable to the subject, as they were formidable to the foe: a rare composition of softness and sharpness they had, which makes any man's temper very happy. It may be understood of the good harmony and dear affection, that, for the most part, was between Saul and Jonathan, they were lovely and pleasant one to another. Jonathan a dutiful son, Saul an affectionate father, and therefore dear to each other in their lives, and *in their death they were not divided*, but kept close together in the stand they made against the Philistines, and fell together in the same cause. (4.) That he had enriched his country with the spoils of conquered nations, and introduced a finer and more fashionable dress. When they had a king like the nations, they must have clothes like the nations; and herein he was in a particular manner obliging to the ladies, *ver. 24.* The *daughters of Israel*, he clothed in scarlet, which was their delight. (2.) He was very grateful to Jonathan, his sworn friend. Besides the tears he sheds over him, and the encomiums he gives of him, in common with Saul, he mentions him with some marks of distinction, *ver. 25. O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places*, which, compared with *ver. 19.* intimates, that he meant him by the beauty of Israel, which he there saith was slain upon the high places. He laments Jonathan as his particular friend, *ver. 26. My brother Jonathan*, not so much because of what he would have been to him if he had lived, very serviceable, no doubt, in his advancement to the throne, and instrumental to prevent those long struggles, which, for want of his assistance, he had with the house of Saul: had this been the only ground of his grief, it had been selfish; but he lamented him for what he had been; *very pleasant hast thou been unto me*; but that pleasantness is now over, and *I am distressed for thee*. He had reason to say, that Jonathan's love to him was wonderful; sure never was the like, for a man to love one who he knew was to take the crown over his head, and to be so faithful to his rival: this far surpassed the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy. See here, 1. That nothing is more delightful in this world, than a true friend, that is wise and good, that kindly receives and returns our affection, and is faithful

to us in all our true interests. 2. That nothing is more distressful than the loss of such a friend, it is parting with a piece of one's self. It is the vanity of this world, that what is most pleasant to us, we are most liable to be distressed in. The more we love, the more we grieve.

(3.) He was deeply concerned for the honour of God; for that is it which he has an eye to, when he fears lest *the daughters of the uncircumcised*, that are out of covenant with God, triumph over Israel, and the God of Israel, *ver. 20.* Good men are touched in a very sensible part by the reproaches of them that reproach God.

(4.) He was deeply concerned for the publick welfare. It was the beauty of Israel that was slain, *ver. 19.* and the honour of the publick disgraced: the *mighty are fallen*, that is three times lamented, *ver. 19, 25, 27.* and so the strength of the people is weakened. Publick losses are most laid to heart by men of publick spirits. David hoped God would make him instrumental to repair those losses, and yet laments them.

2. David here shews himself to be a man of an admirable good fancy; a witty man, as well as a wise and holy man. The expressions are all very fine, and apt to work upon the passions. 1. The embargo he would fain lay upon fame is elegant, *ver. 20. Tell it not in Gath.* It grieved him to the heart, to think that it would be proclaimed in the cities of the Philistines, and they would insult over Israel upon it, and the more, in remembrance of the triumphs of Israel over them formerly, when they sang, *Saul has slain his thousands*; that would now be retorted. 2. The curse he entails on the mountains of Gilboa, the theatre on which this tragedy was acted, *Let there be no dew upon you, nor fields of offerings*, *ver. 21.* This is a poetical strain, like that of Job, *Let the day perish wherein I was born.* Not as if David wished, that any part of the land of Israel might be barren, but to express his sorrow for the thing, he speaks with a seeming indignation at the place. Observe, (1.) How the fruitfulness of the earth depends upon heaven. The worst thing he could wish to the mountains of Gilboa was barrenness, and unprofitableness to man; those are miserable, that are useless: it was the curse Christ pronounced on the fig-tree, *never fruit grow on thee more*, and that took effect, the fig-tree withered away: this on the mountains of Gilboa did not: but when he wished them barren, he wished there might be no rain upon them: and if the heavens be brass, the earth will soon be iron. (2.) How the fruitfulness of the earth must therefore be devoted to heaven: which is intimated in his calling the fruitful fields, *fields of offerings.* Those fruits of their land that were offered to God, were the crown and glory of it; and therefore the failure of the offerings, is the saddest consequent of the failure of the corn. See *Joel i. 9.* To want that wherewith we should honour God, is worse than to want that wherewith we should sustain our selves. This is the reproach David fastens upon the mountains of Gilboa, which having been stained with royal blood, thereby forfeited celestial dews. In this elegy, Saul had a more honourable interment, than that which the men of Jabesh-gilead gave him.

C H A P. II.

David had paid his due respects to the memory of Saul his prince, and Jonathan his friend, and what he did was as much his praise as theirs; he is now considering what is to be done next. Saul is dead, now therefore David arise. 1. By divine direction from God, he went up to Hebron, and was there anointed king, *ver. 1,—4.* 2. He returned thanks to the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul, *ver. 5,—7.* 3. Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, is set up in opposition to him, *ver. 8,—11.* 4. A warm encounter happens between David's party, and Ishbosheth's, in which, (1.) Twelve of each side engaged hand to hand, and were all slain, *ver. 12,—16.* (2.) Saul's party was beaten, *ver. 17.* (3.) Asahel, on David's side, was slain by Abner, *ver. 18,—23.* (4.) Joab, at Abner's request, sounds a retreat, *ver. 24,—28.* (5.) Abner makes the best of his way, *ver. 29.* and the loss on both sides is computed, *ver. 30,—32.* So that here we have an account of a civil war in Israel, which, in process of time, ended in the compleat settlement of David on the throne.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. 2. So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabals wife the Carmelite. 3. And his men that were with him, did David bring up, every man with his household, and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah: and they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul: 5. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-

gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him. 6. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

When Saul and Jonathan were dead, though David knew himself anointed to be king, and now saw his way very clear, yet he did not presently send messengers through all the coasts of Israel, to summon all people to come in and swear allegiance to him upon pain of death, but proceeded leisurely; for he that believeth doth not make haste, but waits God's time for the accomplishment of God's promises. Many were come in to his assistance from several tribes, while he continued at Ziklag, as we find, *1 Chron. xii. 1,—22.* and with such a force he might have come in by conquest: but he that will rule with meekness, will not rise with violence. Observe here,

1. The direction he sought and had from God, in this critical juncture, *ver. 1.* He doubted not but to speed, yet he useth proper means, both divine and human. Assurance of hope in God's promise will be so far from slackning, that it will quicken pious endeavour. If I be elected to the crown of life, it doth not follow, then I will do nothing; but then I will do all that he directs me, and follow his conduct who chose me; that good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen. 1. David, according to the precept, *acknowledged God in his way.* He enquired of the Lord, by the breast-plate of judgment, which Abiathar brought him. We must apply our selves to God, not only when we are in distress, but even then when the world smiles upon us, and second causes begin to work in favour of us. His enquiry was, *Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah? Shall I stir hence?* Though Ziklag be in ruins, he will not quit it without direction from God: if I stir hence, *Shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?* Not limiting God to them, if God should so direct him, he would go to any of the cities of Israel. But it speaks his prudence, in the cities of Judah he would find most friends; and his modesty, he would look no further at present than his own tribe. In all our motions and removes, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us. 2. God, according to the promise, directed his path, bid him go up, told him whither, unto Hebron, a priest's city, one of the cities of refuge, so it was to David, and an intimation, that God himself would be to him a little sanctuary. The sepulchres of the patriarchs adjoining to Hebron, would mind him of the ancient promise, on which God had caused him to hope. God sent him not to Beth-lehem his own city, because that was *little among the thousands of Judah*, *Mic. v. 2.* but to Hebron, a more considerable place, and which, perhaps, was then as the county town of that tribe.

2. The care he took of his family and friends in his remove to Hebron. 1. He took his wives with him, *ver. 2.* that as they had been companions with him in tribulation, they might be so in the kingdom. It doth not appear he had as yet any children; his first was born in Hebron, *chap. iii. 2.* 2. He took his friends and followers with him, *ver. 3.* They had accompanied him in his wanderings, and therefore when he gained a settlement, they settled with him. Thus if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him, *2 Tim. ii. 12.* Nay, Christ doth more for his good soldiers, than David could do for his; he found lodging for them, *They dwelt in the cities of Hebron*, the adjacent towns; but to those who continue with Christ in his temptations, he appoints a kingdom, and will feast them at his own table, *Luke xxii. 29, 30.*

3. The honour done him by the men of Judah; they anointed him king over the house of Judah, *ver. 4.* The tribe of Judah had often stood by it self, more than any other of the tribes; in Saul's time it was numbred by it self as a distinct body, *1 Sam. xv. 4.* and had been used to act separately; they did so now; yet they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel, (as *Judg. ix. 22.*) but only over the house of Judah; the rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but as for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God had chosen. See how David rose gradually; he was first anointed king in reverence, then in possession, of one tribe only, and at last of all the tribes; thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the son of David, is set up by degrees: he is Lord of all, by divine designation, but we see not yet all things put under him, *Heb. ii. 8.* David's reigning at first over the house of Judah only, was a tacit intimation of providence, that his kingdom would in a short time be reduced to that again, as it was when the ten tribes revolted from his grandson: and it would be an encouragement to the godly kings of Judah, that David himself at first reigned over Judah only.

4. The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabesh-gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness to Saul. Still he studies to honour the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to shew, that

that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition, or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him, that the men of Jabesh-gilead buried Saul, perhaps, by some that thought he would have been displeased at them as over-officious: But he was far from that, (1.) He commended them for it, *ver. 5.* According as our obligations were to love and honour any while they lived, we ought to shew respect to their remains, *i. e.* their bodies, names, and families when they are dead; Saul was your lord, (saith David) and therefore you did well to shew him this kindness, and do him this honour. 2. He prays to God to bless them for it, and to recompence it to them. *Blessed are ye, and blessed may ye be of the Lord, who will deal kindly with those in a particular manner, that deal kindly with the dead,* as it is *Ruth i. 8.* Due respect and affection shewed to the bodies, names, and families of those that are dead in conscience towards God, is a piece of charity, which shall, in no wise lose its reward. *The Lord shew kindness and truth to you!* *ver. 6. i. e.* kindness according to the promise, what kindness God shews is in truth, is what one may trust to. 3. He promiseth to make them amends for it, *I also will requite you.* He doth not turn them over to God for a recompence, that he might excuse himself from rewarding them: good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude, but they are too cheap to be rested in, where there is an ability to do more. 4. He prudently takes this opportunity to court them into his interest, *ver. 7.* They had paid their last respects to Saul, and he would have them to be the last, *The house of Judah have anointed me king,* and it will be your wisdom to concur with them, and in that to be valiant. We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or despise the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.

8 ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Sauls host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. 9. And he made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10. Ishbosheth Sauls son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years: but the house of Judah followed David. 11. (And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months.) 12. ¶ And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. 14. And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us: and Joab said, Let them arise. 15. Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword into his fellows side: so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17. And there was a very sore battle that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Here is, 1. A rivalry between two kings; David, whom God made king, and Ishbosheth, whom Abner made king. One would have thought when Saul was slain, and all his sons that had sense and spirit enough to take the field with him, David should have come to the throne without any opposition, since all Israel knew not only how he had signalized himself, but how manifestly God had designed him to it; but such a spirit of contradiction is there in the devices of men, to the counsels of God, that such a weak and silly thing as Ishbosheth, who was not thought fit to go with his father to the battle, shall yet be thought fit to succeed him in the government, rather than David shall come peaceably to it. Herein David's kingdom was typical of the Messiah's, against which the heathens rage, and the rulers take counsel, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* (1.) Abner was the person who set up Ishbosheth in competition with David; perhaps, in his zeal for the lineal succession; since they must have a king like the nations, in this they must be like them, that the crown must descend from father to son: Or rather, in his affection to his own family and relations, (for he was Saul's uncle) and, because he had no other way to secure to himself the post of honour he was in, as captain of the host. See how much mischief the pride and ambition of one man may be the occasion of. Ishbosheth would never have set up himself, if Abner had not set him up, and made a tool of him to serve his own purposes. (2.) Mahanaim was the place where he first made his claim. On the other side Jordan, where it was thought David had the least interest, and being at a distance from his forces, they might have time to strength-

en themselves. But having set up his standard there, the unthinking people of all the tribes of Israel, that is, the generality of them submitted to him, *ver. 9.* and Judah only was intire for David. This was a further trial of the faith of David in the promise of God, and of his patience, whether he could wait God's time for the performance of that promise. (3.) Some difficulty there is about the time of the continuance of this competition. David reigned over Judah only about seven years, *ver. 11.* and yet, *ver. 10.* Ishbosheth reigned over Israel two years: either before those two years, or after, or both, it was in general for the house of Saul, *chap. iii. 6.* and not any particular person of that house that Abner declared. Or, these two years he reigned before the war broke out, *ver. 12.* which continued long, even the remaining five years, *chap. iii. 1.*

2. A rencounter between their two armies. It doth not appear that either side brought their whole force into the field, for the slaughter was but small, *ver. 30, 31.* we may wonder, 1. That the men of Judah did not appear and act more vigorously for David, to reduce all the nation into obedience to him; but it is likely David would not suffer them to act offensively, chusing rather to wait till the thing would do itself, or rather till God would do it for him, without the effusion of Israelitish blood, for to him, as a type of Christ, that was very precious, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* Even those that were his adversaries he looked upon as his subjects, and would treat them accordingly. 2. That the men of Israel could in a manner stand neuter, and sit down tamely under Ishbosheth, for so many years, especially considering what characters many of the tribes wore at this time, as we find them, *1 Chron. xii. 23, &c. Wise men, mighty men, men of valour, expert in war,* and not of double heart, and yet for seven years together, for ought appears, most of them seemed indifferent, in whose hand the publick administration was. Divine providence serves its own purposes, by the stupidity of men, at some times, and the activity of the same persons, at other times; they unlike themselves, and yet the motions of providence uniform.

1. In this battle Abner was the aggressor. David sat still to see how the matter would fall, but the house of Saul, and Abner at the head of it gave the challenge, and they went by the worst; therefore *go not forth hastily to strive,* nor be forward to begin quarrels, *lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof,* *Prov. xxv. 8.* A fool's lips and hands enter into contention.

2. The feat of the war was Gibeon; Abner chose it, because it was in the lot of Benjamin, where Saul had the most friends; yet since he offered battle, Joab, David's general, would not decline it, but there joined issue with him, and met him *by the pool of Gibeon,* *ver. 13.* David's cause being built upon God's promise, feared not the disadvantages of the ground; the pool between them gave both sides time to deliberate.

3. The engagement was at first proposed by Abner, and accepted by Joab, to be between twelve and twelve of a side. 1. It should seem this trial of skill began in sport. Abner made the motion, *ver. 14. let the young men arise, and play before us,* as gladiators; perhaps, Saul had used his men to these barbarous pastimes, like a tyrant indeed, and Abner had learnt it of him, to make a jest of wounds and death, and divert himself with the scenes of blood and horror. He meant, let them fight before us, when he said let them play before us; *fools thus make a mock at sin:* But he is unworthy the name of a man, that can be thus prodigal of human blood, that can thus *throw about firebrands, arrows, and death,* and say, *am not I in sport?* *Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.* Joab having been bred up under David, had so much wisdom as not to make so ill a motion, yet had not resolution enough to resist and gainsay it, when another made it. For he stood upon a point of honour, and thought it a blemish to his reputation to refuse a challenge; and therefore said, *let them arise,* not that he was fond of the sport, or expect that the duels would be decisive, but he would not be hector'd by his antagonist: How many precious lives have thus been sacrificed to the capricious of proud men? twelve of each side were accordingly called out as champions to enter the lists, a double jury of life and death, not others, but their own; and the undertakers on Abner's side seem to have been most forward, for they took the field first, *ver. 15.* having, perhaps, been bred up in a foolish ambition, thus to serve the humour of their commander in chief. But, 2. However it begun, it ended in blood, *ver. 16.* they thrust every man his sword into his fellows side, spurred on by honour, not by enmity, so they fell down together, *i. e.* all the twenty four were slain, such an equal match were they for one another, and so resolute, that neither side would either beg or give quarter; they did, as it were by agreement (saith *Josephus*) dispatch one another with mutual wounds. They that strike at other mens lives, oft throw away their own, and death only conquers, and rides in triumph. The wonderful obstinacy of both sides was remembered in the name given to the place, Helkath-hazzurim, *the field of rocky men,* men that were not only strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy, that stirred not at the sight of death: Yet the stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, *Psal. lxxvi. 5.* Poor honour for men to purchase at so vast an expence: they that lose their lives for Christ shall find them.

4. The whole army at length engaged, and Abner's forces were routed, *ver. 17.* The former was a drawn battle, in which all were

were killed on both sides, and therefore they must put it upon another trial, in which, (as it often happens) they that gave the challenge went away with loss. David had God on his side; his side therefore was victorious.

18. ¶ And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. 19. And Asahel pursued after Abner, and in going he turned not to the right hand, nor to the left from following Abner. 20. Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art thou Asahel?* And he answered, *I am.* 21. And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand, or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22. And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? 23. Howbeit, he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still. 24. Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah that lieth before Giah, by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

We have here the contest between Abner and Asahel; Asahel, the brother of Joab, and cousin german to David was one of the principal commanders of David's forces, and was famous for swiftness in running, he was as light of foot as a wild-roer, *ver* 18. this he got the name of by swift pursuing, not swift flying: Yet, we may suppose, he was not comparable to Abner for a skilful experienced soldier, we must therefore observe,

1. How rash he was in aiming to make Abner his prisoner: He pursued after him, and no other, *ver* 19. Proud of his relation to David and Joab, his own swiftness, and the success of his party, no less a trophy of victory would now serve the young spark, than Abner himself, either slain or bound, which he thought would put an end to the war, and effectually open David's way to the throne. This made him very eager in the pursuit, and careless of the opportunities he had of seizing others in his way, on his right hand, and on his left; his eye is on Abner only. The design was brave, had he been *par negotio*: but let not the swift man glory in his swiftness, any more than the strong man in his strength, *magnis excidit ausis*.

2. How fair Abner was in giving him notice of the danger he run himself upon, and advising him not to meddle to his own hurt, 2 Chron. xxv. 19. (1.) He bid him content himself with a lesser prey, *ver* 21. lay hold on one of the young men, plunder him, and make him thy prisoner, meddle with thy match, but pretend not to one who is so much superior to thee. It is wisdom in all contests to compare our own strength, and that of our adversaries, and to take heed of being partial to ourselves in making the comparison, lest we prove in the issue enemies to our selves, Luke xiv. 31. 2. He begged of him not to put him upon the necessity of slaying him in his own defence, which he was very loth to do, but must do rather than be slain by him, *ver* 22. Abner, it seems, either loved Joab, or feared him, for he was very loth to incur his displeasure, which he would certainly do, if he slew Asahel. It is commendable for enemies to be thus respectful one to another. Abner's care how he should lift up his face to Joab, gives cause to suspect, that he really believed David would have the kingdom at last, according to the divine designation, and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.

3. How fatal Asahel's wilfulness was to him. He refused to turn aside, thinking, that therefore Abner spoke him fair, because he feared him; but what came of it? Abner as soon as he came up to him, gave him his death's wound with a back stroke, *ver* 23. he smote him with the hinder end of his spear, from which he feared no danger. This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against, but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done execution with it; and here it did effectual execution, Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here, 1. How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy, or the butt-end of a spear, yet from these Asahel receives his death's wound. 2. How we are oft betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel's swiftness which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he run upon his death, instead of running from it. Asahel's fall was not only Abner's security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror's pursuit, and gave Abner time to rally again; for all that came to the

place stood still; on by Joab and Abishai instead of being disheartened, were exasperated by it, and pursued Abner with so much the more fury, *ver* 25. and overtook him at last about sun-set, when the approaching night would oblige them to retire.

25. ¶ And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill. 26. Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27. And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28. So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29. And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim. 30. And Joab returned from following after Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of Davids servants nineteen men, and Asahel. 31. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin and of Abners men, so that three hundred and threescore men died. 32. ¶ And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem: and Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Here 1. Abner being conquered, poorly begs for a cessation of arms; he rallied the remains of his forces on the top of a hill, *ver* 25. as if he would have made head again, but becomes a humble suppliant to Joab for a little breathing-time, *ver* 26. He that was most forward and fond to fight, was the first that had enough of it. He that made a jest of blood-shed, *ver* 14. let the young men arise and play before us, is now sick of it, when he finds himself on the losing hand, and the sword he made so light of drawing, threatened to touch himself. Observe how his note is changed: then it was but playing with the sword, now shall the sword devour for ever? It had devoured but one day, yet to him it seemed for ever, because it went against him; and very willing he is now, that the sun should not go down upon the wrath. Now he can appeal to Joab himself concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war, *knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?* It will be reflected upon with regret, when the account comes to be made up, for whoever gets in a civil war, the community is sure to lose. Perhaps, he refers to the bitterness that was in the tribes of Israel, in the end of their war with Benjamin, when they wept sore for the desolations which they themselves had made, *Judg.* xxi. 2. Now he begs of Joab to sound a retreat, and pleads that they were brethren, who ought not thus to bite and devour one another; he that in the morning would have Joab bid the people fall upon their brethren, now would have him bid them lay down their arms. See here, 1. How easy it is for men to use reason, when it makes for them, that would not use it if it made against them. If Abner had been the conqueror, we should not have had him complaining of the voraciousness of the sword, and the miseries of a civil war, nor pleading that both sides were brethren; but finding himself beaten, all these reasonings are mustered up and improved for the securing of his retreat, and the saving of his scattered troops from being cut off. 2. How the issue of things alters mens minds. The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal. Those that are forward to enter into contention, will, perhaps, repent it before they have done with it, and therefore had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon adviseth. It is true of every sin, it were well if men would consider it in time, that it will be bitterness in the latter end. At the last it bites like a serpent those on whom it fawned.

2. Joab, though a conqueror generously grants it, and sounds a retreat, knowing very well his master's mind, and how averse he was to the shedding of blood. He doth indeed justly upbraid Abner with his forwardness to engage, and lay the blame upon him, that there had been so much blood shed as was, *ver* 27. Unless thou hadst spoken, i. e. hadst given orders to fight, hadst bidden the young men arise and play before us, none of us had struck a stroke, nor drawn a sword against our brethren: Thou complaineest that the sword devours, but who first unsheathed it? Who began? Now thou wouldst have the people parted, but remember who set them on to fight. We had retreated in the morning, if thou hadst not given the challenge. Those that are forward to make mischief, are commonly the first that complain of it. This might have served to excuse Joab if he had pushed on his victory, and made a full end of Abner's forces, but like one that pitied the mistake of his adversaries, and scorned to make an army of Israelites pay dear for the folly of their commander, he very honourably, by

found of trumpet put a stop to the pursuit, (*ver.* 28.) and suffered Abner to make an orderly retreat. It is good husbandry to be sparing of blood. As the soldiers were here very obsequious to the general's orders, so he, no doubt, observed the instructions of his prince, who fought the welfare of all Israel, and therefore not the hurt of any.

3. The armies being separated, both retired to the places whence they came, and both marched in the night, Abner to Mahanaim, on the other side Jordan, *ver.* 29. and Joab to Hebron, where David was, *ver.* 32. The slain on both sides are computed. On David's side only nineteen men were missing, and Asahel, *ver.* 30. who was worth more than them all; on Abner's side three hundred and threescore, *ver.* 31. In civil wars formerly great slaughters had been made; as *Judg.* xii. 6. xx. 44. in comparison with which this was nothing. It was to be hoped they grew wiser and more moderate. Asahel's funeral is here mentioned, the rest they buried in the field of battle, but he was carried to Beth-lehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father, *ver.* 32. Thus are distinctions made between the dust of some and others, but in the resurrection no other difference will be made, but that between godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

C H A P. III.

The battle between Joab and Abner, did not end the controversy between the two houses of Saul and David, but it is in this chapter working towards a period. Here is, 1. The gradual advance of David's interest, ver. 1. 2. The building up of his family, ver. 2,—5. 3. Abner's quarrel with Ishbosheth, and his treaty with David, ver. 6,—12. 4. The preliminaries settled, ver. 13,—16. 5. Abner's undertaking, and attempt, to bring Israel over to David, ver. 17,—21. 6. The treacherous murder of Abner, by Joab, when he was carrying on this matter, ver. 22,—27. 7. David's great concern, and trouble, for the death of Abner, ver. 28,—39.

1. **N**OW there was long war between the house of Saul, and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. 2. ¶ And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: 3. And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite: and the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: 4. And the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith: and the fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital: 5. And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife: these were born to David in Hebron. 6. ¶ And it came to pass while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

Here is, 1. The struggle that David had with the house of Saul, before his settlement in the throne was compleated, *ver.* 1. (1.) Both sides contested; Saul's house, though beheaded and diminished, would not fall tamely. It is not strange that there was war between them, but one would wonder it should be a long war, when David's house had right on its side, and therefore God on its side: but though truth and equity will triumph at last, God may, for wise and holy ends, prolong the conflict. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his establishment at last the more welcome to him. (2.) David's side got ground. The house of Saul went weaker and weaker, lost places, lost men, sunk in its reputation, and grew less considerable, went by the worse in every engagement; but the house of David grew stronger and stronger, many deserted the declining cause of Saul's house, and prudently came into David's interest, being convinced that he would certainly carry the day. The contest between grace and corruption, in the hearts of believers, who are sanctified but in part, may fitly be compared to this here. There is a long war between them, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; but as the work of sanctification is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of David, grows stronger and stronger, till it comes to a perfect man, and judgment is brought forth unto victory.

2. The increase of his own house. Here is an account of six sons he had by six several wives, in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. Perhaps, this is mentioned here, as that which strengthened David's interest, every child, whose welfare was embarked in the common safety, was a fresh security given to the commonwealth for his care of it. He that has his quiver filled with these arrows, shall *speak with his enemy in the gate*, Psalm cxxvii. 5. As the death of Saul's sons weakened his interest, so the birth of David's strengthened his. 1. It was David's fault thus to multiply wives, contrary to the law, *Deut.* xvii. 17. and it was an ill example to his successors. 2. It doth not appear, that in these seven years

he had above one son by each of these wives; some have had as numerous a progeny, and with much more honour and comfort, by one wife. 3. We read not that any of these sons came to be famous, but three of them infamous, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; we have therefore reason to rejoice with trembling, in the building up of our families. 4. His son by Abigail is called Chileab, *ver.* 3. whereas, 1 *Chron.* iii. 1. he is called Daniel. Bishop Patrick tells the reason, which the Hebrew doctors give for these names. That his first name was Daniel, God has judged me, *viz.* against Nabal; but David's enemies reproached him, and said, It was Nabal's son, and not David's; to confute which calumny, providence so ordered it, that as he grew up, he became, in his countenance and features, extremely like David, and resembled him more than any of his children, upon which he gave him the name of Chileab, which signifies, like his father; or, the father's picture. 5. Absalom's mother is said to be the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, a heathen prince; perhaps, David thereby hoped to strengthen his interest, but the product of the marriage was one that proved his grief and shame. 6. The last is called David's wife, which therefore, some think, was Michal, his first and most rightful wife, called here by another name; and though she had no child after she mocked David, she might have before.

Thus was David's house strengthened; but it was Abner that made himself strong for the house of Saul, which is mentioned, *ver.* 6. to shew that if he failed them, they would fall of course.

7. And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? 8. Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dogs head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman? 9. So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him: 10. To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel, and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba. 11. And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him. 12. ¶ And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. 13. ¶ And he said, Well, I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face. 14. And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. 15. And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. 16. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim: then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned. 17. ¶ And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you. 18. Now then do it, for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies. 19. And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron, all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. 20. So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him: and David made Abner, and the men that were with him, a feast. 21. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Here, 1. Abner breaks with Ishbosheth, and deserts his interest, upon a little provocation, which Ishbosheth unadvisedly gave him. God can serve his own purposes, by the sins and follies of men. 1. Ishbosheth accused Abner of no less a crime, than debauching one of his father's concubines, *ver.* 7. Whether it was so or no, doth not appear, nor what ground he had for the suspicion: but however it was, it had been Ishbosheth's prudence to connive at it, considering how much it was his interest not to disoblige Abner. If the thing was false, and his jealousy groundless, it was very disingenuous.

ingenuous and ungrateful, to entertain unjust surmises of one who had ventured his all for him, and was certainly the best friend he had in the world. 2. Abner resented the charge very heinously. Whether he was guilty of the *fault concerning this woman*, or no, he doth not say, *ver. 8.* but we suspect he was guilty, for he doth not expressly deny it; and though he was, he lets Ishbosheth know, (1.) That he scorned to be hit in the teeth with it by him, and would not take it at his hands. What, saith Abner, *Am I a dog's head?* A vile and contemptible animal, that thou exposest me thus? *ver. 8.* Is this my recompence for the kindness I have shewn to thee, and thy father's house, and the good services I have done you? He magnifies the service with this, that it was against Judah, the tribe on which the crown was settled, and which would certainly have it at last: so that in supporting the house of Saul, he acted both against his conscience, and against his interest, for which he deserved a better requital than this; and yet, perhaps, he would not have been so zealous for the house of Saul, if he had not thereby gratified his own ambition, and hoped to find his own account in it. Note, Proud men will not bear to be reprov'd, especially by those whom they think they have oblig'd. (2.) That he would certainly be revenged on him, *ver. 9, 10.* with the utmost degree of arrogance and insolence he lets him know, that as he had rais'd him up, so he could pull him down again, and would do it. He knew that God had sworn to David to give him the kingdom, and yet oppos'd it with all his might, from a principle of ambition, but now complies with it, from a principle of revenge, under colour of some regard to the will of God, which was but a pretence. They that are slaves to their lusts, have many masters, which drive, some one way, and some another, and, according as they make head, men are violently hurried into self-contradictions: Abner's ambition made him zealous for Ishbosheth, and now his revenge made him as zealous for David; if he had sincerely regarded God's promise to David, and acted with an eye to that, he had been steady and uniform in his counsels, and acted in consistence with himself. But while Abner serves his own lusts, God, by him, serves his own purposes, makes even his wrath and revenge to praise him, and ordains strength to David by it. Lastly, See how Ishbosheth was thunder-struck, by Abner's insolence; he *could not answer him again*, *ver. 11.* If Ishbosheth had had the spirit of a man, especially of a prince, he might have answered him, that his merits were the aggravation of his crimes; that he would not be served by so ill a man, and doubted not but to do well enough without him. But he was conscious to himself of his own weakness, and therefore said not a word, lest he should make ill worse. His heart failed him, and he now became, as David had foretold, concerning his enemies, like a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, Psalm lxii. 3.

2. Abner treats with David. One would think he began to grow sick of Ishbosheth's cause, and sought an opportunity to desert it, or else, however he might threaten Ishbosheth with it, for the quashing of his charge against him, he would not have made good his angry words so soon as he did, *ver. 12.* He sent messengers to David, to tell him that he was at his service. *Whose is the land?* Is it not thine? For thou hast the best title to the government, and the best interest in the peoples affections. Note, God can find out ways to make those serviceable to the kingdom of Christ, who yet have no sincere affection for it, and who have vigorously set themselves against it. Enemies are sometimes made a footstool, not only to be trodden upon, but to ascend by. The earth helped the woman.

3. David enters into a treaty with Abner, but upon condition that he procure him the restitution of Michal his wife, *ver. 13.* Hereby, 1. David shewed the sincerity of his conjugal affection to his first and most rightful wife, neither her marrying another, nor his, had alienated him from her; many waters could not quench that love. 2. He testified his respect to the house of Saul: so far was he from trampling upon it, now it was fallen, that, even in his elevation, he valued himself not a little by his relation to it. He cannot be pleas'd with the honours of the throne, unless he have Michal, Saul's daughter, to share with him in them; so far was he from bearing any malice to the family of his enemy. Abner sent him word, that he must apply himself to Ishbosheth, which he did, *ver. 14.* pleading, that he had purchased her at a dear rate, and she was wrongfully taken from him: Ishbosheth durst not deny his demand, now he wanted Abner to stand by him, but took her from Phaltiel, to whom Saul had married her, *ver. 15.* and Abner conducted her to David, not doubting, but that then he should be doubly welcome, when he brought him a wife in one hand, and a crown in the other. Her latter husband was loth to part with her, and followed her weeping, 16. but there was no remedy, he must thank himself; for when he took her, he knew that another had right to her. Usurpers must expect to resign. Let no man therefore set his heart on that which he is not entitled to. If any disagreement hath separated husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God, let them be reconciled, and come together again; let all former quarrels be forgotten, and let them live together in love, according to God's holy ordinance.

4. Abner useth his interest with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David; knowing, that which way they went, the

common people would follow of course. Now it serves his own turn, he can plead in David's behalf, that he was, 1. Israel's choice, *ver. 17.* *Ye sought for him in time past to be king over you* when he had signalized himself in so many engagements with the Philistines, and done you so much good service; no man can pretend to greater personal merit than David, nor to less than Ishbosheth; you have tried them both, *Detur digniori*: Let David be your king. 2. God's choice, *ver. 18.* *The Lord hath spoken of David.* Compare *ver. 9.* When God appointed Samuel to anoint him, he did, in effect, promise, that by his hand he would save Israel; for, for that end he was made king. God having promised, by David's hand, to save Israel, it is both your duty, in compliance with God's will, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to him: and it is the greatest folly in the world to oppose him. Who would have expected such reasonings as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know, and own, *that he has loved them*, Rev. iii. 9. He particularly applied himself to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul: he was the man that had deceived them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed.

5. David concludes the treaty with Abner; and he did wisely and well therein; for, whatever induced Abner to it, it was a good work to put an end to the war, and to settle the Lord's anointed on the throne; and it was as lawful for David to make use of his agency, as it is for a poor man to receive an alms from a Pharisee, who gives it in pride and hypocrisy. Abner reported to David the sense of the people, and the success of his communications with them, *ver. 19.* He came now, not as at first, incognito, but with a retinue of twenty men, and David entertained him with a feast, *ver. 20.* in token of reconciliation, and joy; and as a pledge of the agreement between them: it was a feast upon a covenant, like that, *Gen. xxvi. 30.* *If thine enemy hunger, feed him*; but if he submit, feast him. Abner, pleas'd with his entertainment, the prevention of his fall with Saul's house, (which would have been inevitable, if he had not taken this course) and much more with the prospect he had of preferment under David, undertakes, in a little time, to perfect the revolution, and to bring all Israel into obedience to David, *ver. 21.* He tells David he shall *reign over all that his heart desired*. He knew David's elevation took rise from God's appointment, yet he insinuates, that it sprung from his own ambition, and desire of rule; thus (as bad men oft do) he measured that good man by himself. However, David and he parted very good friends, and the affair between them, in a very good posture.

22. ¶ And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: (but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.)

23. When Joab, and all the host that was with him, were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace. 24. Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee, why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? 25. Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out, and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest. 26. And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. 27. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate, to speak with him quietly: and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died; for the blood of Asahel his brother. 28. ¶ And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever, from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: 29. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his fathers house, and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread. 30. So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. 31. ¶ And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rent your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier. 32. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lift up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. 33. And the king lamented.

lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? 34. Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35. And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat, while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down. 36. And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did, pleased all the people. 37. For all the people, and all Israel understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39. And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king, and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

We have here an account of the murder of Abner by Joab, and David's deep repentment of it.

1. Joab very insolently fell foul upon David for treating with Abner. It happened he was abroad upon service when Abner was with David, pursuing a troop, either of Philistines, or of Saul's party; but, upon his return, was informed that Abner was just gone, *ver. 22, 23.* and that a great many kind things had passed between David and him. He had all the reason in the world to be satisfied of David's prudence, and to acquiesce in the measures he took, knowing him to be a wise and good man himself, and under a divine conduct in all his affairs; and yet, as if he had the same sway in David's cause, that Abner had in Ish-bosheth's, he chides David, and reproaches him to his face, as impolitick, *ver. 24, 25.* *What hast thou done?* As if David were accountable to him for what he did: *Why hast thou sent him away?* When thou mightest have made him a prisoner? He came as a spy, and will certainly betray thee. I know not whether to wonder more, that Joab had impudence enough to give such an affront to his prince, or that David had patience enough to take it. He doth, in effect, call David a fool, when he tells him he knew Abner came to deceive him, and yet he trusted him. We find no answer that David gave him, not because he feared him, as Ish-bosheth did Abner, *ver. 11.* but because he despised him, or because Joab had not so much good manners as to stay for an answer.

2. He very treacherously sent for Abner back, and, under colour of a private conference with him, barbarously killed him with his own hand. That he made use of David's name, under pretence of giving him some further instructions, is intimated in that, but *David knew it not*, *ver. 26.* Abner, designing no harm, feared none, but very innocently returned to Hebron, and when he found Joab waiting for him in the gate, turned aside with him to speak with him privately, forgetting what he himself had said, when he slew Asahel, *How shall I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?* chap. ii. 22. and there Joab murdered him, *ver. 27.* and it is intimated, *ver. 30.* that Abishai was privy to the design, and was aiding and abetting, and would have come in to his brother's assistance, if there had been occasion; he is therefore charged as an accessory; *Joab and Abishai slew Abner*, though, perhaps, he only knew it who is privy to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts.

Now in this, 1. It is certain the Lord was righteous. Abner had maliciously, and against the convictions of his conscience, opposed David; he had now basely deserted Ish-bosheth, and betrayed him, under pretence of regard to God and Israel, but really from a principle of pride and revenge, and impatience of control; God will not therefore use so ill a man, though David might, in so good a work, as the uniting of Israel. Judgments are prepared for such scorners as Abner was. But, 2. It is as certain that Joab was unrighteous, and, in what he did, did wickedly. David was a man after God's heart, but could not have those about him, no not in places of the greatest trust, after his own heart. Many a good prince, and a good master, has been forced to employ bad men. 1. Even the pretence for doing this was very unjust. Abner had indeed slain his brother Asahel, and Joab and Abishai pretended herein to be the avengers of his blood, *ver. 27, 30.* but Abner slew Asahel in an open war, wherein Abner indeed had given the challenge, but Joab himself had accepted it, and had slain many of Abner's friends; he did it likewise in his own defence, and not till he had given him fair warning, which he would not take, and he did it with reluctance; but Joab here shed *the blood of war in peace*, 1 Kings ii. 3. 2. That which we have reason to think was at the bottom of Joab's enmity to Abner, made it much worse. Joab was now general of David's forces, but if Abner should come into his interest, he would possibly be preferred before him, being a senior officer, and more experienced in the art of war. This Joab was jealous of, and could better bear the guilt of blood, than the thoughts of a rival. 3. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of speaking peaceably to him, *Deut. xxvii. 24.* Had he challen-

ged him, he had done like a soldier, but to assassinate him, was done villainously, and like a coward. *His words were softer than oil, yet were drawn swords*, Psalm lv. 21. Thus he basely slew Amasa, chap. xx. 9. 4. The doing of it was a great affront and injury to David, who was now in treaty with Abner, and Joab knew it. Abner was now actually in his master's service, so that, through his side, he struck at David himself. 5. It was a great aggravation of the murder that he did it in the gate, openly and avowedly, as one that was not ashamed, nor could blush. The gate was the place of judgment, and the place of concourse; so that he did it in defiance of justice, both the just sentence of the magistrates, and the just resentments of the crowd: as one that neither feared God, nor regarded man, but thought himself above all control: and Hebron was a Levites city, and a city of refuge.

3. David laid it mightily to heart, and many ways expressed his detestation of this execrable villainy.

1. He washed his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood. Let any should suspect that Joab had some secret intimation from David to do as he did, and the rather, because he went so long unpunished, he here solemnly appeals to God concerning his innocency; *I and my kingdom are guiltless* (and my kingdom is so, because I am so) *before the Lord for ever*, *ver. 28.* it is a comfort to be able to say, when any ill thing is done, that we had no hand in it. *We have not shed this blood*, Deut. xxi. 7. However we may be censured or suspected, *our hearts shall not reproach us*.

2. He entailed the curse for it upon Joab and his family, *ver. 29.* *Let it rest on the head of Joab*, let the blood cry against him, and let divine vengeance follow him. Let the iniquity be visited upon his children, and children's children, in some hereditary disease or other. The longer the punishment is delayed, the longer let it last when it doth come. Let his posterity be stigmatized, blemished with an issue, or a leprosy, which will shut them out from society, let them be beggars, or cripples, or come to some untimely end, that it may be said here is one of Joab's race, this intimates that the guilt of blood brings a curse upon families; if men do not avenge it, God will; and will lay up the iniquity for the children. But, methinks, a resolute punishment of the murderer himself would better have become David, than this passionate imprecation of God's judgments upon his posterity.

3. He called upon all about him, even Joab himself to lament the death of Abner, *ver. 31.* *Rend your clothes and mourn before Abner.* i. e. before the hearse of Abner, as Abraham is said to mourn before his dead, Gen. xxiii. 2, 3. and he gives a reason why they should attend this funeral with sincere and solemn mourning, *ver. 38.* because there is *a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel.* His alliance to Saul, his place as general, his interest, and the great services he had formerly done, were enough to denominate him a prince and a great man. When he could not call him a saint and a good man, he said nothing of that, but what was true he gave him the praise of, though he had been his enemy, that he was a prince and a great man; such a man fallen in Israel, and fallen this day, just when he was a doing the best deed he ever did in his life: This day, when he was likely to be so serviceable to the publick peace and welfare, and could so ill be spared.

1. Let them all lament it. The humbling change death puts all men under is to be lamented, especially princes and great men, alas, alas, (allude Rev. xviii. 10.) How mean, how little are they made my death, who made themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. But we are especially obliged to lament the fall of useful men in the midst of their usefulness, and when there is most need of them. A publick loss must be every man's grief, for every man shares in it. Thus David took care that honour should be done to the memory of a man of merit, to animate others.

2. Let Joab, in a particular manner, lament it, which he has less heart, but more reason to do than any of them. If he could be brought to do it sincerely, it would be an expression of repentance for his sin in slaying him: If he did it in shew only, as it is likely he did, yet it was a sort of penance imposed upon him, and a present commutation of the punishment. If he do not as yet expiate the murder with his blood, let him do something towards it with tears. This, perhaps, Joab submitted to with no great reluctance, now he had gained his point. Now he is on the bier, no matter in what pomp he lies there. *Sit divus, modo non sit vivus.*

4. David himself followed the corpse as chief mourner, and made a funeral oration at the grave. He attended the bier, *ver. 31.* and wept at the grave, *ver. 32.* Though Abner had been his enemy, and might possibly have proved no fast friend, yet, because he had been a man of bravery in the field, and might have done great service in the publick counsels at this critical juncture, all former quarrels are forgotten, and David is a true mourner for his fall. What he said over the grave fetched fresh floods of tears from the eyes of all that were present, when they thought they had already paid the debt in full, *ver. 33, 34.* *Died Abner as a fool dieth?* 1. He speaks as one vexed that Abner was fooled out of his life; that so great a man as he, so famed for conduct and courage, should be imposed upon by a colour of friendship, slain by surprize, and so die as a fool dies. The wisest and stoutest of men have no fence against treachery. To see Abner, who thought himself the main hinge on which the great affairs of Israel turned, so considerable as himself

himself to be able to turn the scale of a trembling government, his head full of great projects and great prospects, to see him made a fool of by a base rival, and falling of a sudden a sacrifice to his ambition and jealousy, this stains the pride of all glory, and would put one out of conceit with worldly grandeur; *Put not your trust in princes*, Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4. And let us therefore make that sure which we cannot be fooled out of. A man may have his life and all that is dear to him taken from him, and not be able to prevent it with all his wisdom care and integrity, but there is that which no thief can break through to steal. See here how much we are beholden to God's providence more than to our own prudence, for the continuance of our lives and comforts: Were it not for the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, how soon would the weak and innocent become an easy prey to the strong and merciless, and the wisest die as fools! Or, 2. He speaks as one boasting that Abner did not fool himself out of his life: *Died Abner as a fool dies?* No, he did not, not as a criminal, a traitor or felon, that forfeits his life into the hands of publick justice, his hands were not pinioned, or his feet fettered, as those of malefactors are; Abner falls not before just men, by a judicial sentence, but as a man, an innocent man falleth before wicked men, thieves and robbers, so fellest thou. *Died Abner as Nabal died?* So the seventy read it. Nabal died as he lived, like himself, like a sot; but Abner's fate was such as might have been the fate of the wisest and best man in the world. Abner did not throw away his life as Asahel did, who wilfully run upon the spear after fair warning, but was struck by surprize. Note, It is a sad thing to die like a fool, as they do that any way shorten their own days, and much more they that make no provision for another world.

5. He fasted all that day, and would by no means be perswaded to eat any thing till night, *ver. 35.* this was then the usage of great mourners, to refrain for the time from bodily refreshments, as *chap. i. 12. 1 Sam. xxxi. 13.* How incongruous is it then to turn the house of mourning into a house of feasting? This respect which David paid to Abner was very pleasing to the people, and satisfied them that he was not in the least accessory to the murder, (*ver. 36, 37.*) which he was solicitous to give all possible proof of, lest Joab's villainy should have made him odious, as that of Simeon and Levi did Jacob, *Gen. xxxiv. 30.* On this occasion it is said, that whatever the king did pleased all the people. Which speaks, 1. His good affection to them, he studied to please them in every thing, and carefully avoided what might be disoblighing. 2. Their good opinion of him; they thought every thing he did well done; such a mutual willingness to please, and easiness to be pleased will make every relation comfortable.

6. He bewailed it that he could not with safety do justice on the murderers, *ver. 39.* he was weak, his kingdom newly planted, and a little shake would overthrow it, Joab's family had a great interest, were bold and daring, and to make them his enemies now might be of ill consequence. These sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, too big for the law to take hold of, and therefore, though by man, by the magistrate, the blood of a murderer should be shed, *Gen. ix. 6.* David bears the sword in vain, and contents himself as a private person, to leave them to the judgment of God, *the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.* Now this is a diminution, 1. To David's greatness; he is anointed king, and yet is kept in awe by his own subjects, and some of them are too hard for him. Who would be fond of power when a man may have the name of it, and must be accountable for it, and yet be hampered in the use of it? 2. To David's goodness. He ought to have done his duty, and trusted God with the issue. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* If the law had had its course against Joab, perhaps the murder of Ish-bosheth, Amnon, and others had been prevented. It was carnal policy and cruel pity that spared Joab. Righteousness supports the throne, and will never shake it. Yet it was only a reprieve David gave to Joab; on his death-bed he left it to Solomon, (who could the better wield the sword of justice, because he had no occasion to draw the sword of war) to avenge the blood of Abner. Evil pursues sinners, and will overtake them at last. David preferred Abner's son Jaafiel, *1 Chron. xxxvii. 21.*

C H A P. IV.

When Abner was slain, David was at a loss for a friend to perfect the reduction of those tribes that were yet in Ish-bosheth's interest, which way to think it should be done he could not tell; but here providence brings it about by the removal of Ish-bosheth. (1.) Two of his own servants slew him, and brought his head to David, ver. 1,---8, (2.) David instead of rewarding them, put them to death for what they had done, ver. 9,---12.

1. **A**ND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. 2. And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah,

and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin; 3. And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.) 4. And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet, and was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled; and it came to pass as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame; and his name was Mephibosheth. 5. And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon. 6. And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib; and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7. For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bed-chamber, and they smote him and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night. 8. And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David unto Hebron, and said to the king, Behold, the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Here is 1. The weakness of Saul's house; still it went weaker and weaker. 1. As for Ish-bosheth that was in possession of the throne, his hands were feeble, *ver. 1.* all the strength they ever had was from Abner's support, and now he was dead, he had no spirit left in him. Though Abner had in a passion deserted his interest, yet he hoped by his means to have made good terms with David, but now even that hope fails him, and he sees himself forsaken by his friends, and at the mercy of his enemies. All the Israelites that adhered to him were troubled, and at a loss what to do, whether to proceed in their treaty with David or no. 2. As for Mephibosheth, that in the right of his father Jonathan had a prior title, his feet were lame, and he was unfit for any service, *ver. 4.* He was but five years old when his father and grandfather were killed; his nurse hearing of the Philistines victory, was apprehensive that in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to that, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown: Under the apprehension of this she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place where he could not be found; or in some strange place where he could not be come at; and, making more haste than good speed, she fell the child, and by the fall some bone was broke or put out, and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp. See what ill accidents children are liable to in their infancy, the effect of which may stick by them to their great uneasiness all their days: even the children of princes and great men, the children of good men, for such a one Jonathan was, children that are well tended, and have nurses of their own to take care of them, yet are not always safe. What reason have we to be thankful to God for the preservation of our limbs, and senses to us, through the many perils of the weak and helpless state of infancy, and to own his goodness in giving the little ones angels a charge concerning us, to bear us up in their arms, out of which there is no danger of falling, *Psal. xci. 12.*

2. The murder of Saul's son: we are here told,

1. Who were the murderers. Baanah and Rechab, *ver. 2, 3.* They were own brothers, as Simeon and Levi, and partners in iniquity: They were, or had been Ish-bosheth's own servants, employed under him, the more base and treacherous it was in them to do him a mischief. They were Benjamites, of his own tribe. They were of the city of Beeroth; for some reason which we cannot now account for, care is here taken to let us know in a parenthesis that that city belonged to the lot of Benjamin, so we find *Josh. xviii. 25.* but that the inhabitants, upon some occasion or other, perhaps, upon the death of Saul, retired to Gittaim, another city which lay not far off in the same tribe, but better fortified by nature, being situate (if we may depend upon Mr. Fuller's map) between the two rocks Bozez and Seneh; there the Beerothites were when this was written, and probably took root there, and never returned to Beeroth again, which made Beeroth that had been one of the cities of the Gibeonites (*Josh. ix. 17.*) to be forgotten, and Gittaim to be famous long after, as we find, *Neh. x. 33.*

2. How the murder was committed, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* see here, 1. The slothfulness of Ish-bosheth. He lay upon his bed at noon; it doth not appear that the country was at any time of the year so hot, as to oblige the inhabitants to retire at noon, as we are told they do in Spain in the heat of summer; but Ish-bosheth was a sluggish man, loved his ease, and hated business: and when he should have been in this critical juncture at the head of his forces in the field,

field, or at the head of his counsels in a treaty with David, he was lying upon his bed, and sleeping, for his hands were feeble, *ver. 1.* and so were his head and heart. When those difficulties disanimate us, which would rather invigorate us and sharpen our endeavours, we betray both our crowns and lives. *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty and ruin:* The idle soul is an easy prey to the destroyer. 2. The treachery of Baanah and Rechab. They came into the house, under pretence of fetching wheat for the victualling of their regiments, and such was the plainness of those times, that the king's corn-chamber, and his bed-chamber lay near together, which gave them an opportunity, when they were fetching wheat to murder him as he lay on the bed. We know not when and where death will meet us, nor when we lie down to sleep, can we be sure but that we may sleep the sleep of death before we wake. Nor do we know from what unsuspected hand a fatal stroke may come. Ish-bosheth's own men that should have protected his life, took it away.

3. The murderers triumph in what they had done. As if they had performed some very glorious action, and the doing of it for David's advantage was enough not only to justify it, but to sanctify it, they make a present of Ish-bosheth's head to David, *ver. 8.* *Behold the head of thine enemy,* than which they thought nothing could be more acceptable to him; yea, and they make themselves instruments of God's justice, ministers to bear his sword, though they had no commission, *the Lord hath avenged thee this day of Saul, and of his seed.* Not that they had any regard either to God, or David's honour, they aimed at nothing but to make their own fortunes, (as we say) and to get preferment in David's court; but to ingratiate themselves with him, they pretend a concern for his life, a conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him in full possession of the throne. Jehu pretended zeal for the Lord of hosts, when an ambition to set up himself and his own family was the spring of his actions.

9. ¶ And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, *As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,* 10. When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: 11. How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person, in his own house, upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? 12. And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron: but they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner, in Hebron.

We have here justice done upon the murderers of Ish-bosheth. 1. Sentence past upon them. There needed no evidence, their own tongues witnessed against them, and were so far from denying the fact, that they gloried in it; David therefore shews them the heinousness of the crime, and, that blood called for blood from his hand, who was the chief magistrate, and was, by office, the avenger of blood: And, perhaps, he was the more vigorous in the prosecution, because, for reasons of state, he had spared Joab. *Shall I not require the blood of the slain, at the hand of the slayers,* and since they cannot make restitution, take theirs instead of it? Observe, (1.) How he aggravates the crime. *ver. 11.* Ish-bosheth was a righteous person, he had done them no wrong, nor designed them any; as to himself, David was satisfied that what opposition he gave him, was not from malice, but mistake, from an apprehension he had of his own title to the crown, and the influence of others upon him, who urged him to put in for it: Note, Charity teaches us to make the best, not only of our friends, but of our enemies, and to think those may be righteous persons, who, yet in some instances do us wrong. I must not presently judge a man an ill man, because I think him so to me. David owns Ish-bosheth an honest man, though he had created him a deal of trouble unjustly. The manner of it much aggravated the crime: To slay him in his own house, which should have been his castle, and upon his bed, when he was in no capacity of making any opposition; this is treacherous and barbarous, and all that is base, and that which every man's heart will rise with indignation at the thought of, that is not perfectly lost to all honour and humanity. Assassinating is confessedly the most odious and villainous way of murdering. *Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.* (1.) He quotes a precedent, *ver. 10.* he had put him to death, that had brought him the tidings of the death of Saul, because he thought it would be good tidings to David. Nothing is here said of that Amalekite's helping Saul to kill himself, only of his bringing the tidings of it: By which it should seem, that the story he told, was, upon enquiry, found to be false, and that he lied against his own head. Now, (saith David) did I treat him as a criminal, and not a favourite, (as he ex-

pected) who brought me Saul's crown, and shall they be held guiltless that bring me Ish-bosheth's head? (3.) He ratifies the sentence with an oath, *ver. 9.* *As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity.* He expresseth himself thus resolutely to prevent the making of any intercession for the criminals by those about him: And thus piously to intimate, that his dependence was upon God, for the putting of him in possession of the promised throne, and that he would not be beholden to any man to help him towards it, by any indirect or unlawful practices. God had redeemed him from all adversity hitherto, helped him over many a difficulty, and through many a danger, and therefore he would depend upon him to crown and compleat his own work. He speaks of his redemption from all adversity, as a thing done, though he had many a storm yet before him, because he knew, he that had delivered would deliver. Hereupon he signs a warrant for the execution of these men, *ver. 12.* This may seem severe, when they intended him a kindness in what they did; but, 1. He would thus shew his detestation of the villainy. When he heard that *the Lord smote Nabal, he gave thanks,* 1 Sam. xxv. 38, 39. *for he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth;* but if wicked men smite Ish-bosheth, they deserve to die for taking God's work out of his hand. 2. He would thus shew his resentment of the great affront they put upon him, in expecting that he should patronize and reward it; they could scarce have done him a greater injury, than thus to think him altogether such a one as themselves; one that cared not what blood he waded through to the crown.

2. Execution done. The murderers were put to death according to law, and their hands and feet were hung up; not their whole bodies, the law forbade that; but only their hands and feet, *in terrorem,* to frighten others, and to be monuments of David's justice, and make that to be taken notice of, which would recommend him to the esteem of the people, as a man fit to rule, and that aimed not at his own preferment, nor had any enmity to the house of Saul, but only and sincerely designed the publick welfare. But what a confusion was this to the two murderers! What a horrid disappointment! And such they will meet with who think to serve the interests of the son of David, by any immoral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapin; that under colour of religion murder princes, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, *hate their brethren, and cast them out and say, let the Lord be glorified; kill them, and think they do God good service;* however, men may canonize such methods of serving the church and the catholic cause, Christ will let them know another day, that christianity was not intended to destroy humanity; and they, who thus think to merit heaven, shall not escape the damnation of hell.

C H A P. V.

How far Abner's deserting the house of Saul, his murder, and the murder of Ish-bosheth, might contribute to the perfecting of the revolution, and the establishment of David king over all Israel, doth not appear; but, it should seem, that happy change followed presently thereupon, which in this chapter we have an account of. Here is, 1. David anointed king by all the tribes, *ver. 1,---5.* 2. Making himself master of the strong hold of Zion, *ver. 6,---10.* 3. Building himself a house, and strengthening himself in his kingdom, *ver. 11, 12.* 4. His children that were born after this, *ver. 13,---16.* 5. His victories over the Philistines, *ver. 17,---25.*

1. **T**HEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out, and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. 3. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron, and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel. 4. ¶ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

Here is, 1. The humble address of all the tribes to David, beseeching him to take upon him the government, for they were now as sheep having no shepherd, and owning him for their king. Though David might by no means approve the murder of Ish-bosheth, yet he might improve the advantages he gained thereby, and accept the applications made to him thereupon. Judah had submitted to David as their king, above seven years ago, and their ease and happiness, under his administration, encouraged the rest of the tribes to make their court to him. What numbers came from each

each tribe, with what zeal and sincerity they came, and how they were entertained for three days at Hebron, when they were all of one heart to make David king, we have a full account, *1 Chron. xii. 23,—40.* Here we have only the heads of their address, containing the grounds they went upon in making David king.

1. Their relation to him was some inducement. *We are thy bone and thy flesh*, ver. 1. not only thou art our bone, and our flesh, not a stranger, unqualified by the law to be king, *Deut. xvii. 15.* but we are thine, *i. e.* we know that thou considerest us as thy bone and thy flesh, and hast a tender concern for us, as a man has for his own body, which Saul and his house had not. *We are thy bone and thy flesh*, and therefore thou wilt be as glad as we shall be to put an end to this long civil war; and thou wilt take pity on us, protect us, and do thine utmost for our welfare. Those who take Christ for their king, may thus plead with him, *we are thy bone and thy flesh*, thou hast made thyself in all things like unto thy brethren, *Heb. ii. 17.* therefore be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand, *Isa. iii. 6.* 2. His former good services to the publick were a further inducement, ver. 2. *When Saul was king*, he was but the cypher, thou wast the figure, *thou wast he that leddest out Israel to battle*, and broughtest them in in triumph; and therefore who so fit now to fill the vacant throne? He that is faithful in a little, deserves to be intrusted with more. Former good offices done for us should be gratefully remembered by us, when there is occasion. 3. The divine appointment and designation was the greatest inducement of all. *The Lord said, thou shalt feed my people Israel*, *i. e.* thou shalt rule them, for princes are to feed their people as shepherds, in every thing consulting the subjects benefit, feeding them, and not fleecing them. And thou shalt be not only a king to govern in peace, but a captain to preside in war, and be exposed to all the toils and perils of the camp. Since God hath said so, now at length, when need drives them to it, they are persuaded to say so too.

2. The publick and solemn inauguration of David, ver. 3. A convention of the states was called, all the elders of Israel came to him; the contract was settled, the *pacta conventa* sworn to, and subscribed on both sides; he obliged himself to protect them as their judge in peace, and captain in war; and they obliged themselves to obey him; he made a league with them, to which God was a witness, it was before the Lord. Hereupon he was the third time anointed king. His advances were gradual, that his faith might be tried, and that he might gain experience. And thus his kingdom typified that of the Messiah, which was to come to its height by degrees; for *we see not yet all things put under him*, *Heb. ii. 8.* but we shall see it, *1 Cor. xv. 25.*

3. A general account of his reign and age. He was thirty years old when he began to reign, upon the death of Saul, ver. 4. at that age the Levites were at first appointed to begin their ministry, *Numb. iv. 3.* About that age the son of David entered upon his publick ministry, *Luke iii. 23.* Then men come to their full maturity of strength and judgment. He reigned in all forty years and six months, of which seven years and a half in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, ver. 5. Hebron had been famous, *Josh. xiv. 15.* it was a priest's city, but Jerusalem was to be more so, and to be the holy city. Great kings affected to raise cities of their own, *Gen. x. 11. xxxvi. 32,—35.* David did so, and Jerusalem was it; the city of David. It is a name famous to the end of the bible, *Rev. xxi.* where we read of a new Jerusalem.

6. ¶ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem, unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking David cannot come in hither. 7. Nevertheless, David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. 8. And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame, and the blind, *that are hated of Davids soul*, *he shall be chief and captain*: wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house. 9. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David; and David built round about, from Millo and inward. 10. And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

If Salem, the place which Melchizedeck was king of, was Jerusalem, (as seems probable from Psalm lxxvi. 2.) it was famous in Abraham's time; Joshua, in his time, found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, *Josh. x. 1, 3.* It fell to Benjamin's lot, *Josh. xviii. 28.* but joined close to Judah's, *Josh. xv. 8.* The children of Judah had taken it, *Judg. i. 8.* but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them, *Judg. i. 21.* and they grew so upon them, that it became a city of Jebusites, *Judg. xix. 11.* Now the very first exploit David did, after he

was anointed king over all Israel, was, to gain Jerusalem out of the hand of the Jebusites, which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt, till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul's house, *1 Chron. xii. 29.* submitted to him. Here we have,

1. The Jebusites defiance of David, and his forces. They said, *Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither*, ver. 6. They sent David this provoking message, because, as it is said afterwards, on another occasion, they could not believe, that *ever an enemy should enter into the gates of Jerusalem*, *Lam. iv. 12.* They confided, either, 1. In the protection of their gods, which David, in contempt, had called the blind and the lame, for *they have eyes and see not, feet and walk not*; but, say they, these are the guardians of our city, and except thou take those away, which thou canst never do, thou wilt not come in hither. Some think they were constellated images of brass, set up in the recess of the fort, and intrusted with the custody of the place. They called their idols their Mauzzim, or strong holds, *Dan. xi. 38.* and as such relied on them; *the name of the Lord is our strong tower*, and his arm is strong, his eye piercing. Or, 2. In the strength of their fortifications, which they thought were made so impregnable by nature or art, or both, that the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend them, and make them good against the most powerful assailant. The strong hold of Zion they especially depended on, as that which could not be forced. Probably, they set a parcel of blind and lame people, invalids, or maimed soldiers, to make their appearance upon the walls, in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for him. Though there remains but wounded men among them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers. Compare *Jer. xxxvii. 10.* Note, The enemies of God's people are oft very confident of their own strength, and most secure then, when their day to fall draws nigh.

2. David's success against the Jebusites. Their pride and insolence, instead of daunting him, animated him, and when he made a general assault, he gave this order to his men; *he that smiteth the Jebusites, let him also throw down into the ditch, or gutter, the lame and the blind*, which are set upon the wall to affront us, and our God; and, it is probable, had themselves spoken blasphemous things, and were therefore hated of David's soul. Thus ver. 8. may be read; we fetch our reading of it from *1 Chron. xi. 6.* which speaks only of smiting the Jebusites, but nothing of the blind and the lame. The Jebusites had said, that if these images of theirs did not protect them, *the blind and the lame should not come into the house*, *i. e.* they would never again trust their pædium, (so Mr. Gregory understands it) nor pay the respect they had paid to their images; and David having gained the fort, said so too, that these images, which could not protect their worshippers, should never have any place there more.

3. His fixing of his royal seat in Sion; he himself dwelt in the fort, (the strength whereof, which had given him opposition, and was a terror to him, now contributed to his safety) and he built houses round about for his attendants and guards, ver. 9. from Millo (the town-hall, or state-house) and inward. He proceeded and prospered in all he set his hand to, grew great in honour, strength, and wealth; more and more honourable in the eyes of his subjects, and formidable in the eyes of his enemies, for *the Lord God of hosts was with him*. God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them; and he was with him, to direct, preserve, and prosper him: and those that have the Lord of hosts for them, need not fear what hosts of men or devils can do against them. Those who grow great, must ascribe it to the presence of God with them, and give him the glory of it. The church is called Sion, and the city of the living God; the Jebusites, Christ's enemies, must first be conquered and dispossessed, the blind and the lame taken away, and then Christ divides the spoil, sets up his throne there, and makes it his residence by the Spirit.

11. ¶ And Hiram king of Tyre, sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12. And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. 13. ¶ And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. 14. And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, 15. Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 16. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

Here is, 1. David's house built, a royal palace, fit for the reception of the court he kept, and the court that was made to him, ver. 11. The Jews were husbandmen and shepherds, and did not much addict themselves either to merchandize or manufactures, and therefore Hiram, king of Tyre, a wealthy prince, when he sent to congratulate David's accession to the throne, proffered him workmen

men to build him a house : David thankfully accepted the proffer, and Hiram's workmen build David a house to his mind. Many have excelled in arts and sciences, that were strangers to the covenants of promise ; yet David's house was never the worse, nor the less fit to be dedicated to God, for its being built by the sons of the stranger : it is prophesied of the gospel church, *The sons of the strangers shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall minister unto thee*, Isa. lx. 10.

2. David's government rooted and built up, *ver. 12.* 1. His kingdom was established, there was nothing to shake it, none to disturb his possession, or question his title. He that made him king established him, because he was to be a type of Christ, with whom God's hand should be established, and his *covenant stand fast*, Psalm lxxxix. 21,—28. Saul was made king, but not established, so Adam in innocency ; David was established king, so is the son of David, and all that, through him, are made to our God *kings and priests*. 2. It was exalted in the eyes, both of its friends and enemies : never had the nation of Israel looked so great, nor made such a figure, as it began now to do. Thus it is promised of Christ, that he shall be *higher than the kings of the earth*, Psalm lxxxix. 27. God has *highly exalted him*, Phil. ii. 9. 3. David perceived it, by the wonderful concurrence of providences to his establishment and advancement. *By this I know that thou favourest me*, Psalm xli. 11. Many have the love and favour of God, and do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it ; but to be exalted to that, and established in it, and to perceive it, is happiness enough. 4. He owned that it was *for his people Israel's sake*, that God had done such great things for him ; that he might be a blessing to them, and they might be happy under his administration. God did not make Israel his subjects for his sake, that he might be great, and rich, and absolute, but he made him their king for their sake, that he might lead, and guide, and protect them. Kings are *ministers of God to their people for good*, Rom. xiii. 4.

3. David's family multiplied and increased. All the sons that were born to him after he came to Jerusalem, are here mentioned together ; eleven in all ; besides the six that were born to him before in Hebron, *chap. iii. 2,—5.* There the mothers are mentioned, not here, only in general, that he *took more concubines and wives*, *ver. 13.* Shall we praise him for this ? we praise him not ; we justify him not ; nor can scarce excuse him. The ill example of the patriarchs might make him think there was no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family : *Happy is the man that has his quiver full of these arrows.* But one vine by the side of the house, with the blessing of God, may send boughs to the sea, and branches to the rivers. Adam, by one wife, peopled the world, and Noah repopled it. David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbour's wife, and defiling her ; for men that have once broke the fence, will wander endlessly. Of David's concubines ; see 2 Sam. xv. 16. xvi. 22. xix. 3. Of his sons, see 1 Chron. iii. 5.

17. ¶ But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David ; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. 18. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 19. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines ? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand ? And the LORD said unto David, Go up : for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 20. And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place, Baal-perazim. 21. And there they left their images, and David and his men burnt them. 22. ¶ And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 23. And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up : but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. 24. And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself : for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 25. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him ; and smote the Philistines from Geba, until thou come to Gazer.

The particular service which David was raised up for, was to *save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*, *chap. iii. 18.* This therefore divine providence, in the first place, gives him an opportunity for. Two great victories obtained over the Philistines we have here an account of, by which David not only balanced the

disgrace, and retrieved the loss Israel had sustained in the battle, wherein Saul was slain, but went far towards the total subduing of those vexatious neighbours, the last remains of the devoted nations.

1. In both these actions the Philistines were the aggressors, stirred first towards their own destruction, and pulled it on their own heads. 1. In the former, they *came up to seek David*, *ver. 17.* because they *heard that he was anointed king over Israel*. He that under Saul had slain his ten thousands, what would he do when he himself came to be king ? They therefore thought it was time to look about them, and try to crush his government in its infancy, before it was well settled. Their success against Saul, some years ago, perhaps, encouraged them to make this attack upon David ; but they considered not that David had that presence of God with him, which Saul had forfeited and lost. The kingdom of the Messiah, as soon as ever it was set up in the world, was thus vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, who, with the combined force, both of Jews and Gentiles, made head against it : The heathen raged, and the kings of the earth set themselves to oppose it, but all in vain, *Psalm ii. 1, &c.* The destruction will turn, as this here did, upon Satan's own kingdom. They took counsel together, but were *broken in pieces* ; Isa. viii. 9, 10. 2. In the latter, they *came up yet again*, hoping to recover what they had lost in the former engagement, and their hearts being hardened to their destruction, *ver. 22.* 3. In both they *spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim*, which lay very near Jerusalem ; that city they hoped to make themselves masters of, before David had completed the fortifications of it. Jerusalem, from its infancy, has been aimed at, and struck at, with a particular enmity. Their spreading themselves, intimates, that they were very numerous, and that they made a very formidable appearance. We read of the church's enemies *going up on the breadth of the earth*, Rev. xx. 9. but the further they spread themselves, the fairer mark they are to God's arrows.

2. In both, David, though forward enough to go forth against them, for as soon as he heard it, he *went down to the hold*, to secure some important and advantageous post, *ver. 17.* yet he entered not upon action, till he had *enquired of the Lord*, by the breastplate of judgment, *ver. 19.* and again, *ver. 23.* His enquiry was twofold. 1. Concerning his duty. *Shall I go up ?* Shall I have a commission from heaven to engage them ? One would think he needed not doubt this ; what was he made king for, but to fight the battles of the Lord, and Israel ? But a good man loves to see God going before him in every step he takes. *Shall I go up now !* It is to be done, but is it to be done at this time ? *In all thy ways acknowledge him.* And besides, though the Philistines were publick enemies, yet some of them had been his particular friends ; Achish had been kind to him in his distress, and had protected him : now, saith David, ought not I, in remembrance of that, rather to make peace with them, than to make war with them ? No, saith God, they are Israel's enemies, and are doomed to destruction, and therefore never scruple it, but *go up*. 2. Concerning his success. His conscience asked the former question, *Shall I go up ?* His prudence asked this, *Wilt thou deliver them into my hand ?* Hereby he owns his dependence on God for victory, that he could not conquer them, unless God delivered them into his hand : and refers himself to the good pleasure of God, *Wilt thou do it ?* Yea, saith God, *I will doubtless do it.* If God send us, he will bear us out, and stand by us : the assurance God has given us of victory over our spiritual enemies, that he will tread Satan under our feet shortly, should animate us in our spiritual conflicts. We do not fight at uncertainty. David had now a great army at command, and in good heart, yet he relied more on God's promise, than his own force.

3. In the former of these engagements, David routed the army of the Philistines by dint of sword, *ver. 20.* he *smote them* ; and when he had done, 1. He gave his God the glory ; he said, *The Lord has broken forth upon mine enemies before me* ; I could not have done it, if he had not done it before me ; he opened the breach, like the breach of waters in a dam, which, when once opened, grows wider and wider : the principal part of the work was God's doing ; nay, he did all, what David did was not worth speaking of ; and therefore, *Not unto us, but unto the Lord give glory.* He hoped likewise, that this breach, like that of waters, was the plucking up of the sluice, to let in a final desolation upon them : and, to perpetuate the remembrance of it, he called the place Baal-perazim, the master of the breaches ; because God having broken in upon their forces, he soon had the mastery of them. Let posterity take notice of it to God's honour. 2. He put their gods to shame. They brought the images of their gods into the fields, as their protectors, in imitation of the Israelites bringing the ark into their camp : but being put to flight, they could not stay to carry off their images, for they were a *burthen to the weary beasts*, Isa. xlv. 1. and therefore they left them to fall, with the rest of their baggage, into the hands of the conqueror. Their images failed them, and gave them no assistance, and therefore they left their images to shift for themselves. God can make men lick of those things, that they have been most fond of ; and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast even *the idols of silver and gold to the moles, and the bats*, Isa. ii. 20, 21. David, and his men, converted

verted to their own use the rest of the plunder, but the images they burnt, as God had appointed, *Deut. vii. 5. Ye shall burn their graven images with fire*, in token of your detestation of idolatry, and lest they should be a snare. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that when the ark fell into the Philistines hands, it consumed them, but when these images fell into the hands of Israel, they could not save themselves from being consumed.

4. In the latter of these engagements, God gave David some sensible tokens of his presence with him, bid him not fall upon them directly, as he had done before, but *fetch a compass behind them*, ver. 23. 1. God appoints him to draw back, as *Israel stood still to see the salvation of the Lord*. 2. He promiseth him to charge the enemy himself, by an invisible host of angels, ver. 24. Thou shalt hear the *sound of a going*, like the march of an army in the air, *upon the tops of the mulberry-trees*. Angels tread light, and he that can walk upon the clouds, can, when he pleases, walk on the tops of trees. Or (as bishop Patrick understands it) at the head of the mulberry-trees, i. e. of the wood, or hedge-row of those trees. And, by that sign, thou shalt know that *the Lord goes out before thee*, though thou see him not, yet thou shalt hear him, and faith shall come and be confirmed by hearing. He goes forth to *smite the host of the Philistines*: When David had himself smitten them, ver. 20. he ascribed it to God, *The Lord has broken forth upon mine enemies*, to reward him for which thankful acknowledgement, the next time God did it himself alone, without putting him to any toil or peril; those that own God in what he has done for them, he will do more. But observe, though God promised to *go before him and smite the Philistines*, yet David, when he heard the sound of the going, must bestir himself, and be ready to pursue the victory. Note, God's grace must quicken our endeavours. If God work in us both to will and to do, it doth not follow that we must sit still, as those that have nothing to do, but we must therefore *work out our salvation* with all possible care and diligence, *Phil. ii. 12, 13*. The sound of the going was, 1. A signal to David, when to move; it is comfortable going out when God goes before us. And, 2. Perhaps, it was an alarm to the enemy, and put them into confusion. Hearing the march of an army against their front, they retreated with precipitation, and fell into David's army, which lay behind them in their rear. Those whom God fights against, it is said, *Lev. xxvi. 36. The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them*.

The success of this is briefly set down, ver. 25. David observed his orders, waited God's motion and stirred then, but not till then: Thus he was trained up in a dependence on God and his providence. God performed his promise, went before him, and routed all the enemies force, and David failed not to improve his advantages, he smote the Philistines, even to the borders of their own country. When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the Apostles that were to beat down the devil's kingdom, must not attempt any thing till they received the promise of the Spirit; who came with a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, *Acts ii. 2*. which was typified by this sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry trees; and when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so; they went forth conquering and to conquer.

C H A P. VI.

The obscurity of the ark, during the reign of Saul, had been as great a grievance to Israel as the insults of the Philistines. David having humbled the Philistines and mortified them, in gratitude for that favour, and in pursuance of his designs for the publick welfare, is here bringing up the ark to his own city, that it might be near him, and be an ornament and strength to his new foundation. Here is, 1. An attempt to do it, which failed and miscarried. The design was laid, ver. 1, 2. But, 1. They were guilty of an error in carrying it in a cart, ver. 3, --5. 2. They were punished for that error, by the sudden death of Uzzah, ver. 6, 7. which was a great terror to David, ver. 8, 9. and put a stop to his proceedings, ver. 10, 11. 2. The great joy and satisfaction with which it was at last done, ver. 12. ---15. And, (1.) The easiness that was between David and his people, ver. 17, --19. (2.) The uneasiness that was between David and his wife upon that occasion, ver. 16, --20, --23. And when we consider that the ark was both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ, we shall see this story very instructive.

1. **A** Gain, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims.

N^o. XXIII.

3. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah, and Ahio the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. 5. And David, and all the house of Israel, played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

We have not heard a word of the ark, since it was lodged in Kirjath-jearim, immediately after its return out of its captivity among the Philistines, *1 Sam. vii. 1, 2*. except that once Saul called for it, *1 Sam. xiv. 18*. That which, in former days, had made so great a figure, is now thrown aside, as a neglected thing for many years. And if now the ark was for so many years in a house, let it not seem strange, that we find the church so long in the wilderness, *Rev. xii. 14*. Perpetual visibility is no mark of the true church. God is graciously present with the souls of his people, when they want the external tokens of his presence. But now David is settled in the throne, the honour of the ark begins to revive, and *Israel's care of it to flourish again, wherein also*, no doubt, the good people among them had been careful, but they lacked opportunity, allude *Phil. iv. 10*.

1. Here is an honourable mention made of the ark. Because it had not been spoken of a great while: Now it is spoken of, observe how it is described, ver. 2. it is the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims: Or, at which the name, even the name of the Lord of hosts was called upon: Or, upon which the name of the Lord of hosts was called: Or, because of which the name is proclaimed, the name of the Lord of hosts, i. e. God was greatly magnified in the miracles done before the ark. Or, the ark of God; who is called the name (*Lev. xxiv. 11, 16*) the name of the Lord of hosts, sitting on the cherubims upon it. Let us learn hence, 1. To think and speak highly of God. He is the name above every name; the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures in heaven and earth at his command, and receives homage from them all, and yet is pleased to dwell between the cherubims, over the propitiatory or mercy-seat, graciously manifesting himself to his people, reconciled in a mediator, and ready to do them good. 2. To think and speak honourably of holy ordinances which are to us, as the ark was to Israel, the tokens of God's presence, (*Mat. xxviii. 20*.) and the means of our communion with him, *Psalms xxvii. 4*. It is the honour of the ark, that it is the ark of God, he is jealous for it, is magnified in it, his name is called upon it. The divine institution puts a beauty and grandeur upon holy ordinances, which otherwise have no form nor comeliness. Christ is our ark, in and by him God manifests his favour, and communicates his grace to us, and accepts our adorations and addresses.

2. Here is an honourable attendance given to the ark, upon the removal of it. Now at length it is enquired after; David made the motion, *1 Chron. xiii. 1, 2, 3*. and the heads of the congregation agreed to it, ver. 4. All the chosen men of Israel are called together to grace the solemnity, to pay their respect to the ark, and to testify their joy in its revival. The nobility and gentry, elders and officers came, to the number of thirty thousand, ver. 1. and the generality of the common people, *1 Chron. xiii. 5*. for, some think, it was done at one of the three great festivals. This would make a noble cavalcade, and would help to possess the young people of the nation, who, perhaps, had scarce heard of the ark, with a mighty veneration for it; for this was certainly a treasure of inestimable value, which the king himself, and all the great men waited upon, and were a guard to.

3. Here are great expressions of joy upon the removal of the ark, ver. 5. David himself, and all that were with him that were musically inclined, made use of such instruments as they had, to excite and express their rejoicing upon this occasion. It might well put them into a transport of joy, to see the ark rise out of obscurity, and move towards a publick station. It is better have the ark in a house than not at all, better in a house than a captive in Dagon's temple. But it is very desirable to have it in a tent pitched on purpose for it, where the resort to it may be more free and open. As secret worship, the more secret the better, so publick worship, the more publick the better: and we have reason to rejoice when restraints are taken off, and the ark of God finds welcome in the city of David, and has not only the protection and support, but the countenance and encouragement of the civil powers; for joy of this, they played before the Lord. Note, publick joy must always be as before the Lord, with an eye to him, and terminating in him, and must not degenerate into that which is carnal and sensual. Dr. Lightfoot supposeth, that upon this occasion, David penned the sixty eighth Psalm, because it begins with that ancient prayer of Moses at the removing of the ark, *Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered*: And notice is taken there, ver. 25. of the singers and players on instruments that attended, and ver. 27. of the princes of several of the tribes, and, perhaps, those words in the

last verse, *O God thou art terrible out of thy holy places*, were added upon occasion of the death of Uzzah.

4. Here is an error that they were guilty of in this matter, that they carried the ark in a cart or carriage, whereas the priests should have carried it upon their shoulders, *ver. 3.* The Kohathites that had had the charge of ark, had no waggons assigned them, because *their service was to bear it upon their shoulders*, Numb. vii. 9. The ark was no such heavy burthen, but that they might, among them, have carried it as far as Mount Sion, upon their shoulders, they need not put it in a cart like a common thing. It was no excuse for them, that the Philistines had done so, and were not punished for it; they knew no better, nor had they any priests or Levites with them to undertake the carrying of it; better carry it in a cart, than that any of Dagon's priests should carry it. Philistines may cart the ark, and not hear of it, but if Israelites do, it is at their peril. And it mended the matter very little, that it was a new cart; old or new, it was not what God had appointed. I wonder how so wise and good a man as David was, that conversed so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight: We will charitably hope, it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service, that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.

6. And when they came to Nachons threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. 7. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for *his error*, and there he died by the ark of God. 8. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place, Perez-uzzah unto this day. 9. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? 10. So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

We have here Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark, when it was upon its journey towards the city of David; a sad providence; which damp't their mirth, stop't the progress of the ark, and for the present dispersed this great assembly, which was come together to attend it, and sent them home in a fright.

1. Uzzah's offence seemed very small. He and his brother Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had long been lodged, having been used to attend it, to shew their willingness to prefer the publick benefit before their own private honour and advantage, undertook to drive the cart, in which the ark was carried; this being, perhaps, the last service they were likely to do it, for others would be employed about it, when it came to the city of David. Ahio went before to clear the way, and, if need were, to lead the oxen; Uzzah followed close to the side of the cart; it happened the oxen shook it, *ver. 6.* The critics are not agreed about the signification of the original word: *They stumbled*: So our margin: *They kicked*, so some, perhaps, against the Goad, with which Uzzah drove them. *They stuck in the mire*, so some. By some accident or other, the ark was in danger of being overthrown: Uzzah thereupon laid hold on it, to save it from falling; we have reason to think, with a very good intention to preserve the reputation of the ark, and to prevent an ill omen. Yet this was his crime: Uzzah was a Levite, but priests only might touch the ark. The law was express concerning the Kohathites, that though they were to carry the ark by the staves, yet *they must not touch any holy thing, lest they die*, Numb. iv. 15. and Uzzah's long familiarity with the ark, and the constant attendance he had given to it might occasion his presumption, but would not excuse it.

2. His punishment for this offence seems very great, *ver. 7.* *The anger of the Lord was kindled against him*, for in sacred things he is a jealous God, and he *smote him there for his rashness*, as the word is, and struck him dead upon the spot. There he sinned, and there he died *by the ark of God*; even the mercy seat would not save him. Why was God thus severe with him? (1.) The touching of the ark was forbidden to the Levites, expressly under pain of death; lest they die; and God by this instance of severity would shew, how he might justly have dealt with our first parents, when they had eaten that which was forbidden under the same penalty, *lest ye die*. (2.) God saw Uzzah's heart, and the presumption and irreverence of that: Perhaps, he affected to shew before this great assembly, how bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity even with that which is most awful, is apt to breed contempt. (3.) David afterwards owned that Uzzah died for an error they were all guilty of, which was carrying the ark in a cart; because it was not carried on the Levites shoulders, *The Lord made that breach upon us*, 1 Chron. xv. 23. But Uzzah was singled out to be made an example, perhaps,

because he had been most forward in advising that way of conveyance; however, he had fallen into another error, which was occasioned by that. It may be the ark was not covered, as it should have been with the covering of Badgers skins, Numb. iv. 6. and that was a further provocation. (4.) God would hereby strike an awe upon the thousands of Israel, would convince them that the ark was never the less venerable, for its having been so long in mean circumstances; and thus he would teach them to rejoice with trembling; and always to treat holy things with reverence and holy fear. (5.) God would hereby teach us, that a good intention will not justify a bad action; it will not suffice to say of that which is ill done, that it was well meant. He will let us know that he can and will secure his ark, and needs not any man's sin to help him to do it. (6.) If it were so great a crime for one to lay hold on the ark of the covenant that had no right to do so, what is it for those to lay claim to the privileges of the covenant, that come not up to the terms of it? To the wicked God saith, *What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?* Psalm l. 16. *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* If the ark was so sacred, and not to be touched irreverently, what is the *blood of the covenant?* Heb. x. 29.

3. David's repentment of this dreadful stroke was very deep, and, perhaps, not altogether as it should have been. He should have humbled himself under God's hand, confessed the error, acknowledged God's righteousness, and deprecated the further tokens of his displeasure, and then have gone on with the good work he had in hand. But we find,

1. He was displeased, it is not said because Uzzah had affronted God, but because God had made a breach upon Uzzah, *ver. 8.* *David's anger was kindled*. It is the same word that is used for God's displeasure, *ver. 7.* Because God was angry, David was angry, and out of humour. As if God might not assert the honour of his ark, and frown upon one that touched it rudely, without asking David leave. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God? arraign his proceedings, or charge him with iniquity? David did not now act like himself, like *a man after God's own heart*. It is not for us to be displeased at any thing that God doth, how unpleasing soever it is to us. The death of Uzzah was indeed an eclipse to the glory of a solemnity, which David valued himself upon more than any thing else; and might give birth to some speculations among those that were disaffected to him, as if God were departing from him too, but, however, he ought to have subscribed to the righteousness and wisdom of God in it, and not to have been displeased at it. When we lie under God's anger, we must keep under our own.

2. He was afraid, *ver. 9.* it should seem, he was afraid with amazement; for he said, *how shall the ark of the Lord come to me?* As if God sought advantages against all that were about him, and was so extream tender of his ark, that there was no dealing with it; and therefore better for him to keep it at a distance, *qui procul a jove, procul a fulmine*: He should rather have said, let the ark come to me, and I will take warning by this to treat it with more reverence: *Provoke me not* (saith God, *Jer. xxv. 6.*) *and I will do you no hurt*. Or this may be looked upon as a good use, which David made of this tremendous judgment; he did not say, sure Uzzah was a sinner above all men, because he suffered such things, but is concerned for himself, as one conscious, not only of his own unworthiness of God's favour, but his obnoxiousness to God's displeasure; God might justly strike me dead as he did Uzzah; *my flesh trembles for fear of thee*, Psalm cxix. 120. This God intends in his judgments, that others may hear and fear. David therefore will not bring the ark into his own city, *ver. 10.* till he is better prepared for its reception.

3. He took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this stroke by a new name he gave to the place, Perez-uzzah, the *breach of Uzzah*, *ver. 8.* He had been lately triumphing in the breach made upon his enemies, and called the place Baal-perazim, a place of breeches. But here is a breach upon his friends. When we see one breach, we should consider, that we know not where the next will be. The memorial of this stroke would be a warning to posterity, to take heed of all rashness and irreverence in dealing about holy things; for *God will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him*.

4. He lodged the ark in a good house, the house of Obed-edom a Levite, which happened to be near the place where this disaster happened, and there, 1. It was kindly entertained and bid welcome, and continued there *three months*, *ver. 10, 11.* Obed-edom knew what slaughter the ark had made among the Philistines that imprisoned it, and the Bethshemites that looked into it. He saw Uzzah struck dead for touching it, and perceived David himself was afraid of meddling with it, yet he cheerfully invites it to his own house, and opens his doors to it without fear, knowing it was a *savour of death unto death*, to those only that treated it ill. "O the courage (saith bishop Hall) of an honest and faithful heart; nothing can make God otherwise than amiable to his own: even his very justice is lovely." 2. It paid well for its entertainment. *The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household*. The same hand that punished Uzzah's proud presumption, rewarded Obed-edom's humble boldness, and made the ark to him, a *savour of life unto life*. Let none think the worse of the gospel, for the

the judgments inflicted on those that reject it, but set in opposition to them the blessings it brings to those that duly receive it. None ever had, or ever shall, have reason to say, that *it is vain to serve God*. Let masters of families be encouraged to keep up religion in their families, and to serve God, and the interests of his kingdom, with their houses and estates, for that is the way to bring a blessing upon all they have. The ark is a guest which none shall lose by, that bid it welcome. Josephus saith, that whereas before Obed-edom was poor, on a sudden, in these three months, his estate increased, to the envy of his neighbours. Piety is the best friend to prosperity. In wisdom's left hand are riches and honour. His household shared in the blessing: it is good living in a family that entertains the ark, for all about it will fare the better for it.

12. ¶ And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, into the city of David, with gladness. 13. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD, had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 14. And David danced before the LORD with all his might, and David was girded with a linen ephod. 15. So David, and all the house of Israel, brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16. And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Sauls daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. 17. ¶ And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings before the LORD. 18. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. 19. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine: so all the people departed every one to his house.

We have here the second attempt to bring the ark home to the city of David, and this succeeded, though the former miscarried. It should seem the blessing with which the house of Obed-edom was blessed for the ark's sake, was a great inducement to David to bring it forward, for when that was told him, *ver. 12.* he hastened to fetch it to him. For, 1. It was an evidence that God was reconciled to them, and his anger was turned away. As David could read God's frowns upon them all in Uzzah's stroke, so he could read God's favour to them all in Obed-edom's prosperity; and if God be at peace with them, they can cheerfully go on with their design. 2. It was an evidence that the ark was not such a burthenstone, as it was taken to be, but, on the contrary, happy was the man that had it near him. Christ is indeed a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, to them that are disobedient, but to them which believe, he is a *corner stone, elect, precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. When David heard that Obed-edom had such joy of the ark, then he would have it to his own city. Note, The experience others have had of the gains of godliness, should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to others' houses, let us bid it welcome to ours; we may have it, and the blessing of it, without fetching it from our neighbours.

Let us see how David managed the matter now.

1. He rectified the former error; did not put the ark in a cart now, but ordered those, whose business it was, to carry it on their shoulders. This is implied here, *ver. 13.* and expressed 1 Chron. xv. 15. Then we make a good use of the judgments of God on our selves, and others, when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss.

2. At their first setting out he offered sacrifices to God, *ver. 13.* by way of atonement for their former errors, and in a thankful acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on the house of Obed-edom. Then we are likely to speed in our enterprizes, when we begin with God, and give diligence to make our peace with him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great sacrifice, to which we owe it, that we are taken into covenant and communion with God, *Psal. 1. 5.*

3. He himself attended the solemnity with the highest expressions of joy that could be, *ver. 14.* he danced before the Lord with all his might; he leaped for joy as one transported with the occasion, and the more, because of the disappointment he met with the last time. It is a pleasure to a good man to see his errors rectified, and himself in the way of his duty. His dancing, I suppose, was not

artificial, by any certain rule or measure, nor do we find that any danced with him; but it was a natural expression of his great joy, and exultation of mind. He did it with all his might, so we should perform all our religious services, as those that are intent upon them, and desire to do them in the best manner: all our might is little enough to be employed in holy duties: the work deserves it all. On this occasion David laid aside his imperial purple, and put on a plain linen ephod, which was light, and convenient for dancing, and was used in religious exercises by those who were no priests, for Samuel wore one, 1 Sam. ii. 18. That great prince thought it no disparagement to him to appear in the habit of a minister to the ark.

4. All the people triumphed in this advancement of the ark, *ver. 15.* they brought it up, into the royal city, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, so expressing their own joy in loud acclamations, and giving notice to all about them to rejoice with them. The publick and free administration of ordinances, not only under the protection, but under the smiles of the civil powers, is just matter of rejoicing to any people.

5. The ark was safely brought to, and honourably deposited in, the place prepared for it, *ver. 17.* they set it in the midst of the tabernacle, or tent, which David had pitched for it; not the tabernacle which Moses reared, that was at Gibeon, 2 Chron. i. 13; and, we may suppose, being made of cloth, in so many hundred years, it was gone to decay, and not fit to be removed; but this was a tent set up on purpose to receive the ark. He would not bring it into a private house, no not his own, lest it should seem to be too much engrossed, and peoples resort to it, to pray before it, should be less free; yet he would not build a house for it, lest that should supersede the building of a more stately temple in due time; and therefore, for the present, he placed it within curtains, under a canopy, in imitation of Moses's tabernacle. As soon as ever it was lodged, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, in thankfulness to God, that the business was now done without any more errors or breaches; and in supplication to God for the continuance of his favour. Note, All our joys must be sanctified, both with praises and prayers; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Now it should seem he penned Psalm cxxxii.

6. The people were then dismissed with great satisfaction. He sent them away, 1. With a gracious prayer; he blessed them in the name of the Lord of hosts, *ver. 18.* having not only a particular interest in heaven, as a prophet, but an authority over them as a prince; for the less is blessed of the better, Heb. vii. 7. He prayed to God to bless them, and particularly to reward them for the honour and respect they had now shewed to his ark; assuring them they should be no losers by their journey, but the blessing of God, upon their affairs at home, would more than bear their charges. He testified his desire of their welfare by this prayer for them, and let them know they had a king that loved them. 2. With a generous treat; for so it was rather than a dole; the great men, it is probable, he entertained at his own house, but to the multitude of Israel, men and women (and children, saith Josephus) he dealt to each a cake of bread, (a spice cake, so some) a good piece of flesh, a handsome, decent piece, so some, a part of the peace-offerings, so Josephus, that they might feast with him, upon the sacrifice, and a flagon, or bottle, of wine, *ver. 19.* probably, he ordered this provision to be made for them at their respective quarters, and this he did, (1.) In token of his joy and gratitude to God. When the heart is enlarged in cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality. The feast of Purim was observed with sending portions one to another, Esth. ix. 22. As they to whom God is merciful, ought to shew mercy in forgiving, so they to whom God is bountiful, ought to exercise bounty in giving. (2.) To recommend himself to the people, and confirm his interest in them, for every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts. They that cared not for his prayers, would love him for his generosity; and this would encourage them to attend him another time, if he saw cause to call them together.

20. ¶ Then David returned to bless his household: and Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the hand-maids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! 21. And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. 22. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. 23. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death.

David having dismissed the congregation with a blessing, returned to bless his household, *ver. 20.* i. e. to pray with them, and for them,

them, and to offer up his family thanksgiving for this national mercy. Ministers must not think that their publick performances will excuse them from their family worship; but when they have with their instructions and prayers blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless the households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged. David, though he had prophets, and priests, and Levites about him to be his chaplains, yet did not devolve the work upon them, but himself *blessed his household*. It is angels work to worship God, and therefore sure that can be no disparagement to the greatest of men.

Never did David return to his house with so much pleasure and satisfaction, as he did now he had got the ark into his neighbourhood; and yet even this joyful day concluded with some uneasiness, occasioned by the pride and peevishness of his wife. Even the palaces of princes are not exempt from domestick troubles. David had pleased all the multitude of Israel, but Michal was not pleased with his dancing before the ark: For this, when he was at a distance she scorned him, and when he came home she scolded him. She was not displeased at his generosity to the people, nor did she grudge the entertainment he gave them, but she thought he diminished himself too much in dancing before the ark. It was not her covetousness but her pride made her fret.

1. When she saw David in the street dancing before the Lord, she *despised him in her heart*, ver. 16. she thought this mighty zeal of his for the ark of God, and the transport of joy he was in upon its coming home to him, was but a foolish thing, and unbecoming so great a soldier, and statesman, and monarch, as he was: it had been enough for him to encourage the devotion of others, but she looked upon it as a thing below him to appear so very devout himself: what a fool (thinks she) doth my husband make of himself now! How fond is he of this ark, that might as well have lain still where it has lain for so many years! Much devotion has almost made him mad. Note, The exercises of religion appear very mean in the eyes of those that have little or no religion themselves.

2. When he came home, in as good a humour as could be, she fell foul upon him, was so full of disdain and indignation, that she could not contain till she had him in private, but went out to meet him with her reproaches.

Observe, 1. How she taunted him, ver. 20. *How glorious was the king of Israel to day!* What a figure didst thou make to day in the midst of the mob; how unbecoming thy post and character! Her contempt of him and his devotion began in the heart, but out of the abundance of that the mouth spake. That which displeased her was his affection to the ark, which she could wish he had no greater kindness for than she had: but she basely represents his carriage in dancing before the ark, as lewd, and immodest, and while really she was displeased at it, as a diminution to his honour, she pretended to dislike it, as a reproach to his virtue, that he *uncovered himself in the eyes of the maid-servants*, so as no man would have done, but *one of the vain fellows*, that cares not how much he shames himself. We have no reason to think that this was true in fact, David, no doubt, observed a decorum, and governed his zeal with discretion; but it is common for those that reproach religion, thus to put false colours upon it, and lay it under the most odious characters. To have abused any man, on this fashion, for his pious zeal, had been very profane, but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to reverence, and one whose prudence and virtue were above the reach of malice it self to blemish, one who had shewed such an affection for her, that he would not accept a crown, unless he might have her restored to him, chap. iii. 13. was a most base and wicked thing, and shewed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her, than of David's wife, or Jonathan's sister.

2. How he replied to her reproach. He doth not upbraid her with her treacherous departure from him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. He had forgiven that, and therefore had forgotten it, though it may be his own conscience on this occasion upbraided him with his folly in receiving her again, for that is said to pollute the land, Jer. iii. 1. but he justifies himself in what he did.

1. He designed thereby to honour God, ver. 21. *It was before the Lord*, and with an eye to him. Whatever invidious contrivance she was pleased to put upon it, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he sincerely aimed at the glory of God, for whom he thought he could never do enough. Here he minds her indeed of the setting aside of her father's house, to make way for him to the throne, that she might not think her self the most proper judge of decency; *God chose me before thy father, and appointed me to be ruler over Israel*, and now I am the fountain of honour; and if the expressions of a warm devotion to God were looked upon as mean and unfashionable in thy father's court, yet *I will play before the Lord*, and thereby bring them into reputation again. And if this be to be vile, ver. 22. *I will be yet more vile*. Note, 1. We should be afraid of censuring the devotion of others, though it may not agree with our sentiments, because, for ought we know, the heart may be upright in it, and who are we that we should despise those whom God has accepted? 2. If we can approve our selves to God in what we do in religion, and do it as before the Lord, we need not value the censures and reproaches of men. If

we appear right in God's eyes, no matter how mean we appear in the eyes of the world. 3. The more we are vilified for well doing, the more resolute we should be in it, and hold our religion the faster, and bind it the closer to us, for the endeavours of Satan's agents to shake us, and to shame us out of it. *I will be yet more vile*.

2. He designed thereby to humble himself. *I will be base in mine own sight*, and will think nothing too mean to stoop to for the honour of God. In the throne of judgment, and in the field of battle, none shall do more to support the grandeur and authority of a prince than David shall, but in acts of devotion he lays aside the thoughts of majesty, humbles himself to the dust before the Lord, joins in with the meanest services done in honour of the ark, and yet thinks it no diminution to him. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

3. He doubted not but even this would turn to his reputation among those whose reproach she feared: *Of the maid-servants shall I be had in honour*. The common people would be so far from thinking the worse of him for these pious condescensions, that they would esteem and honour him so much the more. Those that are truly pious, are sometimes *manifested in the consciences*, even of those that speak ill of them, 2 Cor. v. 11. Let us never be driven from our duty by the fear of reproach, for to be steady and resolute in it, will, perhaps, turn to our reputation more than we think it will. Piety will have its praise, let us not then be indifferent in it, nor afraid or ashamed to own it.

David was contented thus to justify himself, and did not any further animadvert upon Michal's insolence, but God punished her for it, writing her for ever childless from this time forward, ver. 23. she unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. *They that honour God, he will honour*, but those that despise him, and his servants and service, *shall be lightly esteemed*.

C H A P. VII.

Still the ark is David's care, as well as his joy. In this chapter we have, 1. His consultation with Nathan about building a house for it; he signifies his purpose to do it, ver. 1, 2. and Nathan approves his purpose, ver. 3. 2. His communion with God about it. (1.) A gracious message, God set him about it, accepting his purpose, countermanding the performance, and promising an entail of blessings upon his family, ver. 4,---17. (2.) A very humble prayer which David offered up to God, in return to that gracious message: thankfully accepting God's promises to him, and earnestly praying for the performance of them, ver. 18,---29. and in both these there is an eye to the Messiah, and his kingdom.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; 2. That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. 3. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the LORD is with thee.

Here is, 1. David at rest. *He sat in his house*, ver. 1. quiet and undisturbed, having no occasion to take the field; *The Lord had given him rest round about*, from all those that were enemies to his settlement in the throne, and he sets himself to enjoy that rest; though he was a man of war, he was *for peace*, Psal. cxx. 7. and did not *delight in war*. He had not been long at rest, nor was it long before he was again engaged in war: but at present he enjoyed a calm, and he was in his element when he was sitting in his house, meditating in the law of God.

2. David's thought of building a temple for the honour of God. He had built a palace for himself, and a city for his servants, and now he thinks of building a habitation for the ark. 1. Thus he would make a grateful return for the honours God had put upon him. Note, When God in his providence has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory. *What shall I render unto the Lord!* 2. Thus he would improve the present calm, and make a good use of the rest God had given him. Now he was not called out to serve God, and Israel, in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God, in his providence, gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do so much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David, when he sat in his palace, from Nebuchadnezzar's, when he *walked in his*? Dan. iv. 29. That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul

is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him; and how God resisted the proud, and gave grace and glory to the humble, the event shewed. David considered, *ver. 2.* the stateliness of his own habitation: *I dwell in a house of cedar*; and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark, that dwells within curtains, and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace, and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out *a place for the ark*, Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5. and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious grateful souls, (1.) Never think they can do enough for God, but when they have done much, are still projecting to do more, and devising liberal things. (2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations, while they see the church of God in distress, and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who *stretched themselves upon beds of ivory*, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's musick, had not David's spirit, *Amos vi. 4, 6.* nor they who dwelt in their cieled houses, while God's house lay waste.

3. His communicating this thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confident whom he used to advise with. Could not David have gone about it himself? Was it not a good work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but *in multitude of counsellors there is safety.* David told him, that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

4. Nathan's approbation of it. *Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee,* *ver. 3.* we do not find that David told him he proposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him there was not one built, from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bid him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work. Nathan spoke this, not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as a wise and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion, and the service of God, though, it seems, the secret will was otherwise, that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew; other prophets spake it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but, if in any thing they mistook, as Samuel, *1 Sam. xvi. 6.* and Nathan here, God soon rectified the mistake.

4. ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, 5. Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent, and in a tabernacle. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? 8. Now therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 10. (Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more: neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11. And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.) Also the LORD telleth thee, that he will make thee an house. 12. ¶ And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16. And thine house, and thy kingdom, shall

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be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David, and the kind intentions of that favour; the notices and assurances of which God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he intrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him off from his purpose of building the temple, and was therefore sent; 1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it; lest if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should have been despised and insulted over, and David should have been perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet, and discouraged by another. 2. The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error, nor David have his head any further filled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them; though he be the head, they must be the eyes, by whom he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivered this long message to Nathan, assisted his memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully, (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully) as he received it of the Lord.

Now in this message,

1. David's purpose to build God a house is superseded: God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in man; and he was well pleased with it, as appears *1 Kings viii. 18.* *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart*; yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose, *ver. 5.* *Shalt thou build me an house?* No, *thou shalt not*, as it is explained in the parallel place, *1 Chron. xvii. 4.* There is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first. David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquest. David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, and settle the courses of the Levites; but for building the house, his son's genius will lie more that way, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. *As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister.*

The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him, 1. That hitherto he never had had a house built for him, *ver. 6.* a tabernacle had served hitherto, and it might serve a while longer. God matters not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as surely with his people when the ark was in a tent, as when it was in a temple; David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains, a mean and moveable habitation, but God never complained of it as any uneasiness to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet fainted not, nor was weary. Christ, like the ark, when here on earth, walked in a tent and tabernacle, for he *went about doing good*, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his father's house, and there he sat down. The church, like the ark, in this world, is ambulatory, dwells in a tent, because its present state is both pastoral and military, its continuing city is to come. David, in his Psalms, oft calls the tabernacle a temple, as *Psalms v. 7. xxvii. 4. xxix. 9. lxxv. 4. cxxxviii. 2.* because it answered the intention of a temple, though it was made but of curtains: wise and good men value not the shew, while they have the substance. David, perhaps, had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God, in a house of curtains, than any of his successors in the house of cedar. 2. That he had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the sceptres of Israel, *i. e.* to any of the judges, *1 Chron. xvii. 6.* (for rulers are called sceptres, *Ezek. xix. 14.* the great ruler is called so, *Numb. xxiv. 17.*) concerning the building of the temple, *ver. 7.* That worship only is acceptable which is instituted, why should David therefore design what God never ordained? let him wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing, than a temple of his own inventing.

2. David is minded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in his service: as also that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions; but whatever he did for God's honour, God was beforehand with him, *ver. 8, 9.* 1. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition: *Took him from the sheep-cote.* It is good for those who are come to great preferment, to be often minded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful. 2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies, *ver. 9.* *I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest*, to protect thee when pursued, to prosper thee when pursuing; *I have cut off all thine enemies*, that stood in the way of thine advancement and settlement. 3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about; *I have made thee a great name*: He was become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements,

ments, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what they who have, have great reason to be thankful for, and may improve to good purposes; but what they that have not have no reason to be ambitious of: a good name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely, and yet very comfortably.

3. A happy establishment is promised to God's Israel. *ver. 10, 11.* this comes in in a parenthesis, before the promises made to David himself, to let him understand, that what God designed to do for him, was for Israel's sake, that they might be happy under his administration, and to give him the satisfaction of foreseeing peace upon Israel, when it was promised him that he should see his children's children, *Psal. cxxviii. 6.* A good king cannot think himself happy unless his kingdom be so. The promises that follow, relate to his family and posterity, these therefore, which speak of the settlement of Israel, intend the happiness of his own reign. Two things are promised. 1. A quiet place; *I will appoint a place for my people Israel.* It was appointed long ago, yet they were disappointed, but now that appointment should be made good. Canaan should be clearly their own, without any ejection or molestation. 2. A quiet enjoyment of that place; the children of wickedness, meaning, especially, the Philistines, who had been so long a plague to them, *shall not afflict them any more: But, as in the time that I caused judges to be over my people Israel, I will cause thee to rest from all thine enemies,* so *ver. 11.* may be read, *i. e.* I will continue and compleat that rest; the land shall rest from war, as it did under the judges.

4. Blessings are entailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promiseth to build him a house, *ver. 11.* whatever we do for God, or sincerely design to do, though providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name, *ver. 9.* here he promiseth to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise, that his family should flourish when he is gone. Next to the happiness of our souls, and the church of God, we would desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us, may be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah. 1. That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, *when the days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers,* intimate, that David himself should come to his grave in peace; and then *I will set up thy seed.* This favour was so much the greater, because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges, whom he called to feed his people. David's government was the first that was entailed, for the promise made to Christ, of the kingdom, was to reach to his spiritual seed: *If children, then heirs.* 2. That he would settle him in the throne. *I will establish his kingdom,* *ver. 12.* *The throne of his kingdom,* *ver. 13.* His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed, and his administration steady. 3. That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing. *He shall build an house for my name,* *ver. 13.* The work shall be done, though David shall not have the doing of it. 4. That he would take him into the covenant of adoption, *ver. 14, 15.* *I will be his father, and he shall be my son.* We need no more to make us and ours happy, but to have God to be a father to us and them: and all those to whom God is a father, he doth, by his grace, make his sons, by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful father to us, we must be obedient, tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks as unto sons. (1.) That his Father would correct him, when there was occasion, for *what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not!* Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from God's fatherly love. *If he commit iniquity,* as it proved he did, (*1 Kings xi. 1.*) *I will chasten him* to bring him to repentance, but it shall be *with the rod of men;* such a rod as men may wield, and not *plead against him with the great power of a God,* *Job xxiii. 6.* Or rather, such a rod as men may bear. I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion, when there is need, and no more than there is need; it shall be with *the stripes, the touches,* (so the word is) *of the children of men;* not a stroke, or wound, but a gentle touch. (2.) That yet he would not disinherit him, *ver. 15.* *my mercy* (and that is the inheritance of sons) *shall not depart from him.* The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to this promise; though that family was cut short, yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family swayed the sceptre of Judah, but that of David only. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated, *Psal. lxxxix. 3, &c.* as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called *David,* and the *son of David:* that son of David to whom these promises pointed, and in whom they had their full accomplishment. He

was of the seed of David, *Acts xiii. 23.* To him God gave the throne of his father David, *Luke i. 32.* all power, both in heaven and in earth, and authority, to execute judgment. He was to build the Gospel temple, a house for God's name, *Zech. vi. 12, 13.* That promise, *I will be his father, and he shall be my son,* is expressly applied to Christ, by the apostle, *Heb. i. 5.* But the establishing of his house, and his throne, and his kingdom for ever, *ver. 13.* and again, and a third time, *ver. 16.* for ever, can be applied to no other but Christ and his kingdom; David's house, and kingdom, are long since come to an end, it is only the Messiah's kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. The supposition of committing iniquity, cannot indeed be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very comfortably) to his spiritual seed; true believers have their infirmities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

Now, 1. This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David, *ver. 17.* though, in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward to do it, when he was better informed concerning the mind of God. 2. These promises God faithfully performed to David, and his seed, in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God a house, yet God did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the tenor of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances, there are none in God's.

18. ¶ Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God: but thou hast spoken also of thy servants house for a great while to come, and is this the manner of man, O LORD God? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy words sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. 22. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? 24. For thou hast confirmed to thy self thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. 25. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. 28. And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. 29. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God, hast spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan, no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully, as the messenger, but his answer to God he brought himself, and did not send by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message, but while the impressions of it were fresh he retired to return an answer. Observe,

1. The place he retired to: he went in before the Lord, *i. e.* into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is, that men pray every where, but wherever we pray, we must set our selves as before the Lord, and set him before us.

2. The

2. The posture he put himself into, he sat before the Lord. 1. It notes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing are certainly the most proper gestures to be used in prayers; but the Jews from this instance say, it was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other. But this will by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. *David went in and took his place before the Lord*, so it may be read; but when he prayed he stood up as the manner was. Or, he *went in and continued before the Lord*; staid some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. Or, 2. It may note the frame of his spirit at this time. He went in and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God; *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed*.

3. The prayer it self, which is full of the breathings of pious and devout affection towards God.

1. He speaks very humbly of himself, and his own merits. So he begins as one astonished, *who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house?* ver. 18. God had minded him of the meanness of his original; ver. 8. and he subscribed to it; he had low thoughts, (1.) Of his personal merits, *who am I?* He was upon all accounts a very considerable, valuable man: His endowments both of body and mind were extraordinary: His gifts and graces eminent: He was a man of honour, success and usefulness, the darling of his country, and the dread of its enemies, and yet when he comes to speak of himself before God, *Who am I?* A man not worth taking notice of. (2.) Of the merits of his family: *What is my house?* His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah, and himself *the least in his fathers house*, Judg. vi. 15. David thus humbled himself, when Saul's daughter was motioned to him for a wife, 1 Sam. xviii. 18. but now with much more reason. Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advancements, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For the greatest of men are worms, the best are sinners, and those that are highest advanced have nothing but what they have received; *Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all mine enemies. It intimates, that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vouchsafements.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him. 1. In what he had done for him: *Thou hast brought me hitherto*, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me. Though we should be left at uncertainty concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that, which has been done for us *hitherto*, Acts xxvi. 22. 2. In what he had yet further promised him. God had done great things for him already, and yet as if those had been nothing, he had promised to do much more, ver. 19. Note, What God has laid out upon his people is much, but what he has laid up for them is infinitely more, Psalm xxxi. 19. The present graces and comforts of the saints are invaluable gifts, and yet, as if these were too little for God to bestow upon his children, he hath spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity it self reaches. Of this we must own, as David here, (1.) That it is far beyond what we could expect. *Is this the manner of men?* That is, 1. Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? *Is this the law of Adam?* Note, considering what the character and condition of man is, it is very surprizing and amazing that God should deal with him as he doth. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance: unprofitable to God, and therefore under a law of disesteem and disregard; guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation: But how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam! He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate; taken into covenant and communion with God: Could this ever have been thought of? 2. Do men use to deal thus one with another? No, the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high he has respect to the lowly, and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled, waits to be gracious, multiplies his pardons: and is this the manner of men? Some give another sense of this, reading it thus: *And this is the law of man, the Lord Jehovah*: i. e. This promise of one whose kingdom shall be established for ever, must be understood of one that is a man, and yet the Lord Jehovah, this must be the law of such a one: A Messiah from my loins must be man, but reigning for ever must be God.

(2.) That beyond this, there is nothing we can desire. *And what can David say more unto thee?* ver. 20. What can I ask, or wish for more? *Thou Lord knewest thy servant*, knowest what will make me happy, and what thou hast promised is enough to do so. The promise of Christ includes all, if that man, the Lord God, be ours, what can we ask, or think of more? Eph. iii. 20. The promises of the covenant of grace are framed by him that knows us, and therefore knows how to adapt them to every branch of our necessity. He knows us better than we know our selves, and therefore let us be satisfied with the provision he has made for us; what can we say more for our selves in our prayers, than he has said for us in his promises?

3. He ascribes all to the free grace of God, ver. 21. Both the great things he had done for him, and the great things he had made known to him. All was, (1.) For his word's sake, i. e. For the sake of Christ the eternal word; it is all owing to his merit: Or, that thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and store-house of thy people. (2.) According to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, *ex mero motu*; *Even so, father, because it seemed good in thine eyes*. All that God doth for his people in his providences, and secures to them in his promises, is for his pleasure and for his praise, the pleasure of his will, and the praise of his word.

4. He adores the greatness and glory of God, ver. 22. *Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee*. God's gracious condescension to him, and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful veneration for the Divine Majesty; for the nearer any are brought to God, the more they see of his glory; and the dearer we are in his eyes, the greater he should be in ours. And this we must acknowledge concerning God, that there is no being like him, nor any God beside him; and that what we have seen with our eyes, of his power and goodness, is according to all that we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us.

5. He expresseth a great esteem of the Israel of God, ver. 23, 24. As there were none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel; considering, (1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnity. *Elohim halecu, dij iverunt*. God they went. As if there were the same consultation and concurrence of all the persons in the blessed Trinity, about the work of redemption, that there was about the work of creation, when God said, *Let us make man*. "Whom they that were sent of God went to redeem", so the Chaldee; meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of our redemption by Christ, in that, 1. They were redeemed from the nations and their gods, so are we from all iniquity, and all conformity to this present world; Christ came to save his people from their sins. 2. They were redeemed to be a people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself; that he might make himself a great name, and do for them great things; the honour of God and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption. 2. The covenant he had made with them, ver. 24. It was, (1.) mutual; they to be a people to thee, and thou to be a God to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thine attributes engaged for them. (2.) Immutable, thou hast confirmed them. He that makes the covenant makes it sure, and will make it good.

6. He concludes with humble petitions to God.

1. He grounds his petitions upon the message which God had sent him; ver. 27. *Thou hast revealed this to thy servant*, i. e. Thou hast of thine own good will given me the promise, that thou wilt build me a house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this; I durst not have asked such great things, if I had not been directed, and encouraged by this promise to ask them; they are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for thee to give. Thy servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer; so it is in the original, and the Septuagint. Many when they go to pray have their hearts to seek, but David's heart was found; i. e. it was fixed: gathered in from its wandrings, and entirely engaged to the duty, and employed in it. That prayer that is found in the tongue only, will not please God, it must be found in the heart, that must be lifted up and poured out before God. *My son, give God thy heart*.

2. He builds his faith, and hopes to speed, upon the fidelity of God's promise, ver. 25. *Thou art that God*; thou art he, even that God; the Lord of hosts, and God of Israel: Or, that God whose words are true, that God, whom one may depend upon; and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant, which I am therefore bold to pray for.

3. Thence he fetcheth the matter of his prayer, and refers himself to that, as the guide of his prayers.

1. He prays for the performance of his promise, ver. 25. Let the word be made good to me, *on which thou hast caused me to hope*, Psalm cxix. 49. and do as thou hast said; I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm. Thus we must turn God's promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men; God will do as he hath said.

1. He prays for the glorifying of God's name, ver. 26. *Let thy name be magnified for ever*; this ought to be the summary and centre of all our prayers, the Alpha and the Omega of them; begin with *hallowed be thy name*, and end with *thine is the glory for ever*: Whether I be magnified or no, *let thy name be magnified*: And he reckons nothing magnifies God's name more than this, to say, with suitable affections, *The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel*. This speaks the God of Israel gloriously great, that he is the Lord of hosts; and this speaks the Lord of hosts gloriously good, that he is God over Israel, in both, *let his name be magnified for ever*: Let all the creatures, and all the churches give him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God's promise for the honour, not of his own name, but of God's: Thus the son of David prayed, *Fa-*
ther,

ther, glorify thy name, John xii. 28. and chap. xvii. 1. *Glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee.*

3. He prays for his house, for to that the promise hath special reference: 1. That it might be happy, *ver. 29. Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant,* and again, *with thy blessing, let the house of thy servant be truly and eternally blessed: Those whom thou blessest, they are blessed indeed.* The care of good men is very much concerning their families, and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family. 2. That the happiness of it might remain. Let it be *established before thee, ver. 28. Let it continue for ever before thee, ver. 29.* He prays, 1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family; that none of his might ever forfeit it, but that they might walk before God, and that would be their establishment. 2. That his kingdom might have its perfection, and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God, (*Heb. x. 12.*) and received all possible assurance, that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven; this prayer of David the son of Jesse, for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might *continue before God for ever.* See *Psal. lxxii. ult.* The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom, is the desire and faith of all good people.

C H A P. VIII.

David having fought first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, *settling the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all other things were added to him. Here is an account,* 1. *Of his conquests. He triumph'd,* (1.) *Over the Philistines, ver. 1.* (2.) *Over the Moabites, ver. 2.* (3.) *Over the king of Zobah, ver. 3, 4.* (4.) *Over the Syrians, ver. 5, --- 8, 13.* (5.) *Over the Edomites, ver. 14.* 2. *Of the presents that were brought him, and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God, ver. 9, --- 12.* 3. *Of his court, the administration of his government, ver. 15. and his chief officers, ver. 16, --- 18. This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.*

1. **A**ND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines. 2. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground: even with two lines measured he, to put to death; and with one full line to keep alive: and so the Moabites became Davids servants, and brought gifts. 3. David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts: and the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. And from Berah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him, and made head against him, and he having made a good use of that rest, has now commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the revenging of Israel's quarrels, and the recovery of their rights: For as yet they were not in full possession of that country, which by the promise of God they were entitled to.

1. He quite subdued the Philistines, *ver. 1.* They had attacked him when they thought him weak, *chap. v. 17.* and went by the worst then; but when he found himself strong he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexatious and oppressive to Israel, Saul got no ground against them, but David completed Israel's deliverance out of their hands, which Sampson had begun long before, *Judg. xiii. 5.* Metheg-ammah was Gath, (the chief and royal city of the Philistines) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garison

kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah, (*2 Sam. ii. 29.*) which was Metheg, a bridle, (so it signifies) or curb upon the people of Israel; this David took out of their hand, and used it as a curb upon them. Thus when the strong man is disarmed, the armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, and used against him, *Luke xi. 22.* And after the long and frequent struggles, which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, *the son of David shall tread them all under their feet, and make them more than conquerors.*

2. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, *ver. 2.* He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared to till the ground, and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot saith, he laid them on the ground, and measured them with a cord, who should be slain, and who should live: And this is called, *meting out the valley of Succoth, Psal. lx. 6.* The Jews say, he used this severity with the Moabites, because they had slain his parents and brethren whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab, during his exile, *1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.* He did it in justice, because they had been, and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been dangerous enemies to the Israel of God. But observe, though it was necessary two thirds should be cut off, yet the line that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line: Be sure give that length enough: Let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost, *in favorem vitæ,* acts of indemnity must be construed so, as to enlarge the favour. Now Balaam's prophecy was fulfilled, *a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab,* to the utmost of which the fatal line extended, *Numb. xxiv. 17.* The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel, till after the death of Ahab, *2 Kings iii. 4, 5.* then they rebelled and were never reduced.

3. He smote the Syrians, or Aramites: Of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the sixtieth Psalm, *Aram Naharaim, Syria of the rivers,* whose head city was Damascus, (famed for its rivers, *2 Kings v. 12.*) and Aram Zobah which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns. 1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4.* As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates (for so far the land conveyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, *Gen. xv. 18.*) the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be seven hundred, but *1 Chron. xviii. 4.* seven thousand. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were seven hundred, but the horsemen were seven thousand. David houghed the horses, cut the sinews of their hams, and so lamed them, and made them unserviceable, at least in war, God having forbidden them to *multiply horses, Deut. xvii. 16.* David reserved only one hundred chariots out of one thousand for his own use, for he placed his strength not in chariot or horse, but in the living God, *Psal. xx. 7.* and wrote it from his own observation, that a *horse is a vain thing for safety, Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17.* 2. The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah, fell with him. Twenty two thousand were slain in the field, *ver. 5.* So that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garison it for himself, *ver. 6.* The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove in the end to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. *Associate your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces, Isa. viii. 9.*

In all these wars, 1. David was protected. *The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went.* It seems he went in person, and in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardized his own life in the high places of the field, but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he oft speaks of in his Psalms to the glory of God. 2. He was enriched. He took the shields of Gold, which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody, *ver. 7.* and much brass from several cities of Syria, *ver. 8.* which he was entitled to not only *jure belli,* by the uncontrollable right of the longest sword. Get it, and take it, but by commission from heaven, and the ancient of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

9. ¶ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10. Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer; and smitten him (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi) and Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass; 11. Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicate of all nations which he subdued: 12. Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13. And David gat him a name

name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, *being* eighteen thousand men. 14. ¶ And he put garisons into Edom; throughout all Edom put he garisons, and all they of Edom became Davids servants: and the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

Here is, 1. The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems, was at this time in war with the king of Zobah: He hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own son ambassador to him, *ver.* 9. 10. to congratulate his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him, in breaking the power of one he was in fear of, and to beg his friendship; and thus not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, no more than the old Romans did by the like policy, for the wealth he had from the countries he conquered by way of spoil, he had from this by way of present or gratuity: *Vessels of silver and gold.* Better get by composition, than by compulsion.

2. The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations, and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord, *ver.* 11, 12. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to out-shine Alexander's or Cæsar's, that they sought their own glory, but he aimed at the glory of God: All the precious things he was master of were dedicated things; *i. e.* they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations, in allusion to which we find *the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem*, Rev. xxi. 24. *Their gods of gold David burnt*, 2 Sam. v. 21. but their vessels of gold he dedicated; thus in the conquest of a soul, by the grace of the son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but what may be made to him must be dedicated, and the property of it altered; even the merchandise and the hire must be *holiness to the Lord*, Isa. 23. *ult.* the gain *consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth*, Mic. iv. 13. and then it is truly our own, and most comfortably.

3. The reputation he got in a particular manner by his victory over the Syrians, and their allies the Edomites, who acted in conjunction with them; as appears by comparing the title of the sixtieth Psalm, which was penned on this occasion, *ver.* 13. *he gat him a name*, for all that conduct and courage which are the praise of a great and distinguished general. Something extraordinary, it is likely, there was in that action, which turned very much to his honour, yet he is careful to transfer the honour to God; as appears by the Psalm he penned on this occasion, *ver.* 12. It is through God, that we do valiantly.

4. His success against the Edomites; they all became David's servants, *ver.* 14. Now, and not till now Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's Lord, *Gen.* xxvii. 37,---40. and the Edomites continued long tributaries to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till in Joram's time they revolted, 2 Chron. xxi. 8. as Isaac had there foretold, that Esau should in process of time break the yoke from off his neck. Thus David by his conquests, (1.) Secured peace to his son, that he might have time to build the temple. And (2.) Procured wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously, some in one employment, others in another, some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings, and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories were typical of the success of the gospel against the kingdom of Satan, in which the son of David rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and shall reign till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality, and power: and he has as David had, *ver.* 2. a line to kill, and a line to save, for the same gospel is to some a favour of life unto life, to others a favour of death unto death.

15. And David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 16. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17. And Zadock the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests, and Seraiah was the scribe; 18. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and Davids sons were chief rulers.

David was not so engaged in his wars abroad, as to neglect the administration of the government at home. 1. His care extended it self to all the parts of his dominion. *He reigned over all Israel*, *ver.* 15. not only he had right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so, they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government. 2. He did justice with an unbiassed unshaken hand; *he executed judgment unto all his people*; neither did

wrong, nor denied, or delayed right to any. It speaks, (1.) His industry, and close application to business; his easiness of access, and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him: All his people, even the meanest, and those of the most distant tribes were welcome to his council-board. (2.) His impartiality, and the equity of his proceedings in administering justice, who never perverted justice for favour or affection, nor had respect of persons in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth *in righteousness both judge and make war*, Rev. xix. 11. See Psalm lxxii. 1, 2.

3. He kept good order, and good officers in his court. David being the first king that had an established government (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled) he had the forming of the model of the administration: In Saul's time we read of no other great officer but Abner, that was captain of the host; but David instituted more officers. Here is, 1. Two military officers: Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Benaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city trainbands, *archers and slingers*; so the Chaldee; or rather the life-guards, or standing force, that attended the king's person; the pretorian band; the militia: They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administering of justice, and to preserve the publick peace: we find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1 Kings i. 38. (2.) Two ecclesiastical officers; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, *i. e.* they were most employed in the priests work under Abiathar, the high priest. (3.) Two civil officers; one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season; he was prime minister of state, yet not intrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our lord chancellor, but only of the king's memory, let the king be put in mind of business, and he would do it himself. Another that was scribe, or secretary of state, that drew up publick orders and dispatches, and recorded judgments given. Lastly, David's sons as they grew up to be fit for business were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, either in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them: They were chief about the king; so it is explained, 1 Chron. xviii. 17. employed near him, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high, *he gave these gifts*, Eph. iv. 11. *to every man his work*, Mark xiii. 34. David made his sons chief rulers, but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed are better preferred, for they are *made to our God kings and priests*, Rev. i. 6.

C H A P. IX.

The only thing recorded in this chapter, is the kindness David shewed to Jonathan's seed for his sake. (1.) The kind enquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth, v. 1,---4. (2.) The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him, v. 5,---8. (3.) The kind provision he made for him and his, v. 9,---13.

1. **A**ND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathans sake? 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba: and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son which is lame on his feet. 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar. 5. ¶ Then king David sent, and fet him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. 6. Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant. 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan thy fathers sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8. And he bowed himself and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Here is, 1. David's enquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, *ver.* 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born, *ver.* 12. David had too long forgot his obligations to Jonathan, but now at length they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to bethink our

selves, whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good ; better do it late than never. The breviate which Paul gives us of the life of David, is this, *Acts* xiii. 36. that he *served his generation according to the will of God*, i. e. he was a man that made it his business to do good ; witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might, perhaps, have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan, if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he doth more, he enquires of those about him first, *ver.* 1. and when he light of a person, that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, *Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness ?* *ver.* 3. *Is there any*, not only to whom I may shew justice, *Numb.* v. 8. but to whom I may shew kindness ? Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. *The liberal deviseth liberal things*, *Isa.* xxxii. 8. For many times the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are such as will not be light on without enquiry. The most necessitous are the least clamorous.

2. Those he enquired after were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would shew kindness for Jonathan's sake ; *Is there any left of the house of Saul ?* Saul had had a very numerous family, *1 Chron.* viii. 33. enough to replenish a country, and yet so emptied, that none of it appeared ; but it was come to this enquiry, *Is there any left ?* See how the providence of God can empty full families ; see how the sin of man will do it ! Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, *chap.* xxi. 1. But though God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children, David would not. Is there any left that I can shew kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but for Jonathan's.

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he would shew kindness to his house with all his heart, and was forward to do it. He doth not say, is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find some way to take them off, and prevent their giving disturbance to me, or my successor. It was against Ahimelech's mind, that any one was left of the house of Gideon, *Judg.* ix. 5. and against Athaliah's mind, that any one was left of the seed royal, *2 Chron.* xxii. 10, 11. those were usurped governments, David's needed no such vile supports : he was desirous to shew kindness to the house of Saul, not only because he trusted God, and feared not what they could do unto him, but because he was of a charitable disposition, and forgave what they had done to him. Note, We must evidence the sincerity of our forgiving those that have been any way unjust or injurious to us, by being ready, as we have opportunity, to shew kindness both to them and theirs. We must not only not avenge our selves upon them, but we must love them, and *do them good*, *Matt.* v. 44. and not be backward to do any office of love, and good will, to those that have done us many an ill turn, *1 Pet.* iii. 9. — *but contrariwise blessing*. This is the way to overcome evil, and to find mercy for our selves and ours, when we or they need it.

(2.) Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and therefore he would shew kindness to his house. This teaches us, 1. To be mindful of our covenant. The kindness we have promised, we must conscientiously perform, though it should not be claimed. God is faithful to us, let not us be unfaithful to one another. 2. To be mindful of our friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of the laws of our holy religion. *He that has friends, must shew himself friendly*, *Prov.* xviii. 24. If providence has raised us, and our friends and their families are brought low, yet we must not forget former acquaintance, but rather look upon that, as giving us so much the fairer opportunity of being kind to them ; then our friends have most need of us, and we are in the best capacity to help them. Though there be not a solemn league of friendship tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a sacred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him that is in misery pity should be shewed by his friend ; *Job* vi. 14. *A brother is born for adversity*. Friendship obliges us to take cognizance of the families and surviving relations of those we have loved, who, when they left us, left behind them their bodies, their names, and their posterity, to be kind to.

3. The kindness he promised to shew them, he calls the *kindness of God* ; not only great kindness, but, 1. Kindness in pursuance of the covenant that was between him and Jonathan, to which God was a witness. See *1 Sam.* xx. 42. 2. Kindness after God's example, for we must be merciful as he is. He spares those whom he has advantage against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to David was, *1 Sam.* xx. 14. *Shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not*, and the same to my seed. The kindness of God is some greater instance of kindness than one can ordinarily expect from men. 3. It is kindness done after a godly sort, and with an eye to God, and his honour and favour.

2. Information given him concerning Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an old retainer to Saul's family, and knew the state of it ; he is sent for, and examined, and acquaints the king that Jonathan's son was living, but *lame*, *ver.* 3. how he came to be so, we read before, *chap.* iv. 4. and that he lived ob-

scure, probably, among his mother's relations, in Lo-debar, in Gilead, on the other side Jordan, where he was *forgotten, as a dead man out of mind*, but bore it the easier, because he could remember little of the honour he fell from.

3. The bringing of him to court. The king sent (Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem, with all convenient speed, *ver.* 5. Thus he eased Machir of his trouble, and, perhaps, considered him for what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account. This Machir appears to have been a very generous free-hearted man, and to have entertained Mephibosheth, not out of any disaffection to David, or his government, but in compassion to a young gentleman reduced ; for afterwards we find him kind to David himself, when he fled from Absalom, he is named, *2 Sam.* xvii. 27. among those that furnished the king with what he wanted at Mahanaim ; though, when David sent for Mephibosheth from him, he little thought that the time would come, when he himself would gladly be beholden to him : and, perhaps, Machir was then the more ready to help David, in recompence for his kindness to Mephibosheth ; therefore we should be forward to give, because we know not but we ourselves may some time be in want, *Ecc.* xi. 2. *And he that watereth, shall be watered, also himself*.

Now, 1. Mephibosheth presents himself to David with all the respect that was owing to his character. Lame as he was, *he fell on his face, and did reverence*, *ver.* 6. David had thus made his honours to Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, when he was next to the throne, *1 Sam.* xx. 41. *he bowed himself to him three times*, and now Mephibosheth, in like manner, addresseth him, when the tables are turned. Those that when they are in inferior relations shew respect, when they come to be advanced shall have respect shewed them.

2. David received him with all the kindness that could be. 1. He spoke to him as one surprized, but pleased to see him. Mephibosheth ! Why, is there such a man alive ? He remembered his name, for, it is probable, he was born about the time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan. 2. He bid him not be afraid. *Fear not*, *ver.* 7. It is probable, the sight of David put him into some confusion ; to free him from which, he assures him, he sent for him, not out of any jealousy he had of him, or with any ill design upon him, but to shew him kindness. Great men should not take a pleasure in the timorous approaches of their inferiors, for the great God doth not, but should encourage them. 3. He gives him, by grant from the crown, *all the land of Saul his father*, i. e. his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Mephibosheth's rebellion, and added to his own revenue. This was a real favour, and more than giving him a kind word. True friendship will be generous. 4. Though he had thus given him a good estate, sufficient to maintain him, yet, for Jonathan's sake, (whom, perhaps, he saw some resemblance of in Mephibosheth's face) he will take him to be a constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and doth not appear to have any great fitness for business, yet, for his good father's sake, David will take him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was none of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing too little that their friends do for them ; but, on the contrary, speaks as one amazed at the grants David made him, *ver.* 8. *What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am ?* How doth he vilify himself ! Though the son of a prince, and the grandson of a king, yet his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself a dead dog before David. Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences : if, when divine providence brings our condition down divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy. And those who thus humble themselves shall be exalted. How doth he magnify David's kindness ! It had been easy to lessen it, if he had been so disposed : Had he restored him his father's estate, it was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table, that was policy, that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth thinks all wonderful kind that David said and did, and himself less than the least of his favours. See *1 Sam.* xviii. 18.

9. ¶ Then the king called to Ziba Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy masters son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house. 10. Thou therefore and thy sons and thy servants shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy masters son may have food to eat : but Mephibosheth, thy masters son, shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons, and twenty servants. 11. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the kings sons. 12. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose

whose name *was* Micha : and all that dwelt in the house of Ziba, *were* servants unto Mephibosheth. 13. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem : for he did eat continually at the king's table ; and was lame on both his feet.

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it, *ver.* 9. and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, for his father was a mighty man of substance, 1 *Sam.* ix. 1. and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 7. Be it never so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2. The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was, and how to make the most of it, whom having been his father's servant he might confide in, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, *ver.* 10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich ; having much coming in, and little occasion to spend, himself being kept at David's table. Yet he must have food to eat besides his own bread, provisions for his son and servants, and Ziba's sons and servants would come in for their share of his revenue ; for which reason, perhaps, their number is here mentioned, *fifteen sons, and twenty servants*, who would go near to make even with it ; *for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes*, Eccl. v. 11. *All that dwelt in the house of Ziba, were servants to Mephibosheth*, *ver.* 12. i. e. they all lived upon him, and made a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him, and doing him service. The Jews have a saying, He that multiplies servants, multiplies thieves. Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have enough to turn him in, as *the king has commanded, so shall thy servant do*, *ver.* 11. let me alone with the estate : and as for Mephibosheth (they seem to be Ziba's words) if the king please, he need not trouble the court, *he shall eat at my table*, and be as well treated as one of the king's sons. But David will have him to his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post, as Ziba with his : how unfaithful Ziba was to him, we shall find afterwards, *chap.* xvi. 3.

Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and son, his root and off-spring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to illustrate the kindness and love of God our Saviour, towards fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan. Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low, and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall : the son of God enquires after this degenerate race, that enquired not after him ; comes to seek and save them. Those of them that humble themselves before him, and commit themselves to him, he restores them the forfeited inheritance, entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him !*

C H A P. X.

This chapter gives us an account of a war David had with the Ammonites, and the Syrians, their allies, with the occasion and success of it. 1. David sends a friendly embassy to Hanun, king of the Ammonites, *ver.* 1, 2. 2. He, upon a base surmise, that it was ill intended, abused David's ambassadors, *ver.* 3, 4. 3. David resenting it, *ver.* 5. the Ammonites prepared war against him, *ver.* 6. 4. David carries the war into their own country, sends Joab and Abishai against them, who address themselves to the battle with a great deal of conduct and bravery, *ver.* 7,---12. 5. The Ammonites, and the Syrians, their allies, were totally routed, *ver.* 13, 14. 6. The forces of the Syrians, which rallied again, were a second time defeated, *ver.* 15,---19. Thus did David advance his own reputation, for gratitude, in returning kindnesses, and justice, in repaying injuries.

1. **A**N D it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. 2. Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun, the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants, for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. 3. And the princes of the children of

Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee ? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it ? 4. Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, *even* to their buttocks, and sent them away. 5. When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed : and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

Here is, 1. The great respect David payed to his neighbour, the king of the Ammonites, *ver.* 1, 2. 1. The inducement to it, was some kindnesses he had formerly received from Nahash, the deceased king. He *shewed kindness to me*, saith David, *ver.* 2. and therefore (having lately had satisfaction in shewing kindness to Mephibosheth, for his father's sake) he resolves to shew kindness to his son, and to keep up a friendly correspondence with him. Thus the pleasure of doing one kind and generous action, should excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, a cruel enemy, 1 *Sam.* xi. 2. and yet had shewed kindness to David, perhaps, only in contradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him : however, if David receive kindness, he is not nice in examining the grounds and principles of it, but resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharisee give alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet he that receives the alms ought to return thanks for it : God knows the heart, but we do not. 2. The particular instance of respect, was sending an embassy to condole his father's death, as is common among princes in alliance with each other. *David sent to comfort him*. Note, It is a comfort to children when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up their acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners, to find that there are those who mourn with them, are sensible of their loss, and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honouring the memory of their deceased relations, to find there are others who likewise honour it, and had a value for those we valued.

2. The great affront which Hanun the king of the Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors. 1. He hearkened to the spiteful suggestions of his princes, who insinuated, that David's ambassadors, under pretence of being comforters, were sent as spies, *ver.* 3. false men are ready to think others as false as themselves ; and they that bear ill will to their neighbours, are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good will to them. They would not thus have imagined that David dissembled, but that they were conscious to themselves that they could have dissembled to serve a turn. An ill suspicion argues an ill mind. Bishop Patrick's note on this is, that there is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so by men who love no body but themselves. Men of the greatest honour and virtue, must not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented. *Charity thinketh no evil*. 2. Entertaining this vile suggestion he basely abused David's ambassadors, like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was fitter to rake a kennel, than to wear a crown. If he had any reason to suspect that David's messengers came on an ill design, he had done prudently enough to be upon the reserve with them, and to dismiss them as soon as he could ; but it is plain he only sought an occasion to put the utmost disgrace he could upon them, out of an antipathy to their king and country. They were themselves men of honour, and much more so, as they represented the prince that sent them ; they and their reputation were under the special protection of the laws of nations ; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and came among them unarmed ; yet Hanun used them like rogues and vagabonds, and worse ; *shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the midst*, to expose them to the contempt and ridicule of his servants, that they might make sport with them, and they might seem vile.

3. David's tender concern for his servants that were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and to let them know how much he interested himself in their quarrel, and how soon he would revenge it, and directed them to stay at Jericho, a private place, where they would not have occasion to come into company, till that half of their beards, which was shaved off, was grown to such a length that the other half might be decently cut to it, *ver.* 5. The Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour to appear aged and grave ; and therefore it was not fit that persons of their rank and figure should appear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of raiment, it is likely, they had with them, to put on, instead of those which were cut off ; but the loss of their beards would not be so soon repaired ; yet, in time, those would grow again, and all would be well. Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust reproaches ; after a while they will wear off of themselves, and turn only to the shame of their authors, while the injured reputation in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will *bring forth thy righteousness as the light*, therefore wait patiently for him, Psalm xxxvii. 6, 7.

Some have thought that David, in this indignity he received from the king of Ammon, was but well enough served for courting and complimenting that pagan prince, whom he knew to be an inveterate enemy to Israel, and might now remember how, when he would have put out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh-gilead, he designed that, as he did this, for a *reproach upon all Israel*; 1 Sam. xi. 2. What better usage could he expect from such a spiteful family and people? Why should he covet the friendship of a people, which Israel must have so little to do with, as that an Ammonite might not *enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation*, Deut. xxiii. 3.

6. ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men. 7. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 8. And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah *were* by themselves in the field. 9. When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice *men* of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians. 10. And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put *them* in array against the children of Ammon. 11. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. 12. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good. 13. And Joab drew nigh, and the people that *were* with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. 14. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city: so Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The preparation which the Ammonites make for war, *ver. 6.* They saw they had made themselves very odious to David, and obnoxious to his just displeasure; this they might easily foresee, when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a challenge to war, and a bold defiance of him. Yet, it seems, they had not considered how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet his, for now they found themselves an unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service. Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath, and never consider that he is *stronger than they*, 1 Cor. x. 22. The Ammonites gave the affront first, and they were the first that raised forces to justify it. Had they humbled themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably, an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But when they were thus desperately resolved to stand by what they had done, they courted their own ruin.

2. The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, *ver. 7.* When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab, with a great army, to attack them, *ver. 7.* They that are in war with the son of David, not only give the provocation, but begin the war; for he *waits to be gracious*, but they *strengthen themselves against him*, and therefore, *if they turn not, he will whet his sword*, Psalm vii. 12. God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance, *Isa. v. 19.* which will convince them, when it is too late, that *none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered*. It was David's prudence to carry the war into their own country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, Rabbah, as some think, or Medeba, a city in their borders, before which they pitched, to guard their coast, 1 Chron. xix. 7. Such are the terrors and desolations of war, that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it as much as may be at a distance from them.

3. Preparations made on both sides for an engagement. 1. The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of Syrians, whom they had taken into their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank, or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, *ver. 8.* 2. Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own command to fight the Syrians, whom, probably, he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the arts of war, *ver. 9.* The rest of the forces he put under the command of Abishai his brother, to

engage the Ammonites, *ver. 10.* It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them, that his conduct and courage were never so tried as now.

4. Joab's speech before the battle, *ver. 11, 12.* It is not long, but pertinent, and brave. 1. He prudently concert the matter with Abishai his brother, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakning of them; but that, which part soever was born hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposeth the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back, and, in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve that. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, *thou shalt help me, and I will help thee*. Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. They that through grace are conquerors over temptation, must counsel, and comfort, and pray for those that are tempted; *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. The members of the natural body help one another, 1 Cor. xii. 21. 2. He bravely encourageth himself and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put an edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animates his men to charge so much the more furiously; *Be of good courage, and let us play the men*, not for pay and preferment, for honour and fame, but *for our people, and for the cities of our God*; for the publick safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested; God and our country was the word. Let us be valiant, from a principle of love to Israel, that are our people, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace: and from a principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of. The relation which any person or thing stands in to God, should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its service. 3. He piously leaves the issue with God: when we have done our part according to the duty of our place, *let the Lord do that which seemeth him good*. Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty, we may, with the greatest satisfaction, leave the event with God; not thinking that our valour binds him to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleaseth, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

5. The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, *ver. 13, 14.* He provided for the worst, and put the case that the Syrians or Ammonites might prove too strong for him, *ver. 11.* but he proved too strong for them both. We are never the further from success, by our preparing for disappointment. The Syrians were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai, who seem not to have fought at all, but upon the retreat of the Syrians, they fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly, when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly, and another thing when they must either fight or die.

15. ¶ And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16. And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them. 17. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam: and the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. 18. And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David slew *the men* of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there. 19. And when all the kings that *were* servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

Here is, 1. A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour, and to check the progress of David's victorious arms. The forces that were lately dispersed, rallied again, and *gathered themselves together*, *ver. 15.* even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the son of David do so, *Matt. xxii. 34.* *Rev. xix. 19.* These being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies, and dependences, on the other side *the river*, *ver. 16.* and being thus recruited, they hoped to make their part good with Israel, but *they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathered them as sheaves into the floor*, see *Mich. iv. 11, 12, 13.* 2. The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan, *ver. 17.* and in a pitched battle